

In Search of Two Characters

BOOKS BY DORMER CRESTON

Biography

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(George IV and Princess Charlotte)

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Autobiographical

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Poetry

THE CLOWN OF PARADISE
POEMS FROM PAUL VERLAINE

In Search of Two Characters

*Some Intimate Aspects
of
Napoleon and his Son*

BY
DORMER CRESTON

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TO
CHRISTOBEL
WITH ALL MEMORIES

“ There lies a piece of Christ ; a star in dust ”

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PREFACE

THE title of this book indicates its scope. As regards Napoleon, it is not a life of him but an exploration into his character, an attempt to trace his reactions to various emotional pressures. All his life he was unconsciously writing his own biography, recklessly flinging out his ideas, his aims, his policy, his vanities, his disillusionments, for anyone to capture as they flew through the air : and there were always about him people who did capture them, holding his phrases tensely in their mind till the moment when, hurrying to their writing-table, they pinned the living sentences down with the point of their quill. And this cohort of biographers — and from the time he was fifteen till he lay on his deathbed one or another was never lacking — were all exceptionally alert to receive and exact in recording. That this is so is proved by the fact that whoever the recorders are — his secretaries Bourrienne and Méneval, politicians such as Talleyrand and Metternich, intimates such as Las Cases and Gourgaud, thoughtful-minded women such as Madame de Rémusat and Hortense de Beauharnais, even young girls such as Laure Permon and Betsy Balcombe, from the pages of all of them exactly the same man, the intensely individual Napoleon, emerges. In none of their writings would it ever be necessary to say who it is who is speaking — pungent, astounding, perspicacious, naïve, astringent, crafty, egoistical, offensive, flippant, bombastic, profound, but never trivial, never conventional — the same man with his cameo face, seductive manner, and amazing fecundity, is unmistakable.

Not only did Napoleon need to find self-fulfilment in bestriding Europe, he needed the further self-expression of incessant talking. It is astonishing that in a life so bristling with activities, with the subjugation and re-shaping, not only of every country but of every person on whom his calculating eye fell, he yet found time to deluge everyone about him with such a spate of conversation. His mind, like a powerful lens, clarified every subject that rose before it. St. Helena was of course the auditorium *par excellence* for this verbal display. Even one day, when

so wretched with a cold that he went to bed after dinner, he yet, drawing his green silk curtains around him, sent for the handful of men and women who then composed his Court, and grouped about him they conversed with that now disembodied voice.

After months of what to them was half delight, half endurance, they began to hide themselves away from that voice ; Las Cases fled the island altogether ; Bertrand's and Montholon's places at the imperial dinner-table would often remain empty while they dined at home with their wives. Gourgaud alone, who had no wife, and lived but for Napoleon's patronage and affection, was, till his final disillusionment, always eager to be summoned : it might be to work out some problem in algebra : to discuss military strategy : or to " talk about God "—Napoleon telling him one day that he had just realized that, having himself been anointed, he could, if he so wished, act as Gourgaud's confessor.

No artist who has portrayed Napoleon brings him before us with the same vividness as do the literary *compères* who step forward successively to reveal him in his most intimate moments. All the pictorial recorders were at pains to represent something Gargantuan, were overwhelmed with the idea of pomposity : they strained to make Napoleon's brow portentous with Austerlitz, with *le Code Civil*, with all the *éclat* of the First Empire. They did not attempt to show him as an object on which fell light and shade as on any other object. Actually — except for the incisive cut of his mask, a neat conjunction of orbit of eye, nose, and mouth — his appearance, the small body and the big head, feebly portrayed the inner man : it was only when his face was suddenly convulsed with indignation, or when some gentle emotion made it luminous with " ineffable sweetness and charm " — it was only at these moments that his physical envelope acted as an adequate instrument for the spirit it housed. Actually, in the cast of him taken after death, the general impression given is that of a philosopher, a contemplative.

At the present juncture no man's character is of more interest than his, for so much has he been Hitler's forerunner and exemplar, such a dangerous development did he give to the political consciousness of Europe, so shrewdly did he exploit organized propaganda, that to a great extent he must be held responsible for the

hybrid growths which, in seed in his own character, came to such hideous fruition in the mind of his pupil.

As regards the King of Rome, to investigate his character is to investigate his whole life — so short was that life, so bereft was it, except for his transplantation to Austria, of outer incident. Napoleon's consuming wish was to be the great founder of a great dynasty (" *C'est à peine si l'histoire parlera de moi,*" he lamented at St. Helena. "*J'ai été culbuté. Si j'avais maintenu ma dynastie, à la bonne heure . . .*"): the arrival of his son had been the part-fulfilment of this wish, and therefore to write of the father without the son, or of the son without the father, is to cut an essential unity in two. In the mind of each to an extraordinary degree lay the reflection of the other : the father's every ambition and vanity centring in the son : the son's whole inspiration drawn from the father. In Napoleon's youth he was, like his son, fettered by misfortune : Napoleon, by poverty and ill-chance : the King of Rome, by the fact of his being at once an offspring of the royal house of Austria, and the son of Austria's most potent enemy. In consequence, though no two material settings could have been more opposite, the minds of both were often fretted to the verge of desperation. Triply sensitive as the King of Rome was, it was well for him that he died young. He has adorned an early grave more successfully than he would have a throne.

As one investigates Napoleon's character one is astounded at the way, filled as his mind was every hour with intricate business of every description, there yet remained imprinted on his consciousness, not as a mere memory but no less vital than when it occurred, the minutest incident of the past. And most especially any humiliating incident. In his mind nothing whatever got rubbed out. And always the question recurs — how far were the emotional batterings of his early years responsible for his inordinate thirst for self-exaltation ? Humiliated by the world, he had to vindicate himself to the world. It was a living account he was for ever settling. And these exasperations had the more force in that he gradually came to consider himself as the chosen of Providence for the salvation of Europe : a belief he held concurrently, and without any sense of discrepancy, with his assertion "*Eh bien ! in this world one must be a charlatan : it's the only way to succeed !*"

In this essay on the first and second Napoleons I have deliberately avoided as far as possible the highroad of Napoleonic history, and have instead pushed my way down the little bypaths : the noise of battle is only 'heard off'. Those not conversant with the facts of Napoleon I's life may find it convenient to refer to a synopsis of his career on page 389. Down to the minutest incident or spoken word I have kept strictly to my authorities. As a rule it is evident from the context which memoir or diary I am quoting from, but a full list of these authorities will be found at the end of the book.

In the cause of integrity it has been a satisfaction to place both Sir Hudson Lowe and that European catspaw, that bewildered girl, Marie Louise, in an unprejudiced light in which they can at least be judged sanely.

My thanks are due to Sir John Murray for allowing me to quote from *The Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena* by William Forsyth, and to him and Lady Thompson for permission to use extracts from *The Private Diaries of Marie Louise*. I am indebted to Messrs. Plon of Paris for permission to translate passages from M. Jean Hanoteau's edition of *Mémoires de la Reine Hortense*. My gratitude is due to the authors and publishers of other works from which I have made incidental quotations ; to Mr. Edward Kellett for reading my typescript ; and to my typist, Miss Elizabeth Murray, for her competence and inexhaustible patience.

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(From a painting in the possession of Dr. August Heymann of Vienna.)

(From Edward de Wertheimer's "*The Duke of Reichstadt*", by permission of Messrs. John Lane, The Bodley Head Ltd.)

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(From Baring-Gould's "*Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*", by permission of Messrs. Methuen & Co. Ltd.)

“Nor is it always in the most distinguished achievements that men’s virtues or vices may be best discerned ; but very often an action of small note, a short saying, or a jest, shall distinguish a person’s real character more than the greatest sieges, or the most important battles.”

PLUTARCH

AT THE PERMONS'

ON a certain day in 1785 two cadets of l'École Militaire in Paris sat confronting each other, one as artist, the other as model. The crayon drawing that was the outcome of this sitting still exists. The trenchant profile, the wisps of dark hair dangling over the high cheek-bone, give the general impression of a handsome young gypsy. The face has none of that expansive glow of a boy to whom from birth life has held out its hand : experience has already imprinted on those youthful but firm-cut contours an air of endurance, of self-reliance : they are already impregnated with that undefinable air of composure which comes of continuous reflection. Over the whole lies something static ; the spirit is inwardly withdrawn.

Such was Napoleon at about fifteen as seen through the eyes of a fellow military cadet ; such, but less formed, had been his face when, a small boy of nine, he arrived at his first military school at Brienne. To the other boys he had at once become an object not only of hostility but of derision ; for Corsica which, except for a few towns, had escaped from Italian rule — mainly through the efforts of the island patriot, Paoli — had in spite of the Corsicans' guerilla resistance become, in 1770, the property of France. Napoleon, a pugnacious child, hot with enthusiasm for the independence of Corsica, and full of admiration for Paoli — to whom his father had been secretary — found himself forced into daily and hourly contact with these French boys to whom any Corsican boy was, *ipso facto*, an inferior creature : and with his too large head, his stumbling walk, his muddled French, his poverty, and his home-made clothes he was an irresistible victim. He came from a family whose pride was a cherished possession, and to counteract the hateful sense of personal diminishment that this contemptuous attitude induced, he adopted the pose that he disliked everyone. The fact of coming up against this jeering unkindness the moment he stepped out into life had the most

in the house, regularly attending church services, and bringing up her family. In the fierceness of her maternal affection she was like a lioness with her cubs: and the simile is one that would have appealed to her. When they were ill she was all tenderness; when well, ruthless. Her admonitory slaps were such that at times the recipient would fall to the ground. But though her cuffs could fell Napoleon physically, they had no effect on him otherwise, and when he was five she had placed him, the one boy pupil, in a school for little girls, hoping that their gentler personalities would soften his truculence. The experiment was not a success, and he had been withdrawn. Napoleon appreciated all he owed her and, in admiration of his own powerful brain and constitution, was in early and later life full of gratitude to the source from which such vigours had sprung ("As for my mother, she is worthy of every sort of admiration." "*C'est une maîtresse femme que Madame ! Une femme de tête !*"), but in his years of display he became exasperated by her economies and provincialism. When he was at St. Helena she wrote offering to come and join him: but he made no efforts in that direction. She, believing him to be in a state of destitution on his Atlantic rock, declared that she would be ready, for his benefit, to work as housemaid.

Notwithstanding, her virtues were of such rough texture that, to read of, they seem more to injure than adorn her personality. Her devotion to her children was unparalleled: her methods of enforcing gratitude for this devotion, questionable. We see her, when she considered it bad family policy, since Napoleon disapproved of the connection, for her son Lucien to keep his wife to whom he was devoted, insisting, as it were at the point of the maternal sword, that he should annul his marriage. She, his mother, Laetitia, willed it. "You have always given me proofs of deference, now it is the case of giving the greatest of all." "It is your mother who begs it of you." If he does not comply she will, she says, be "condemned to drag through my days with sorrow". Several years later, Napoleon having decided that he now required, not annulment of his brother's marriage, but divorce, Laetitia tried to bring pressure on Lucien's wife. "The Emperor wishes for your divorce; it depends on you to make Lucien decide on it"; "if you have any consideration for a

mother who has always known how to make sacrifices for her children, etc. etc."

Imagery came naturally to Laetitia, and was inherited by Napoleon. "The oriental turn he always gave his sentences was", says the Duchesse d'Abrantès, who knew him intimately, "one of his most marked characteristics", and she quotes him as crying out against Salicetti, "In the morning of my life he bruised my future. He dried up my ideas of fame on their stalk." But what in Napoleon was no doubt effective, in Laetitia, with her limited intelligence, must on many occasions have been exasperating. Sometimes, however, her sayings were pungent. "Rings adorn fingers, but they may fall off, and the fingers remain," she remarked with prophetic instinct. In her early days penury, hardships, child-bearing, widowhood, disaster, and, finally, exile, had battered against her, but, her beautiful Corsican face still beautiful, her tough Corsican body still tough, she had emerged from it all triumphant. Angular in mind and spirit, unabashed by the fact that scarcely anyone could understand her French, scorning social suppleness as not appertaining to the true stuff of living, she steps resolutely in and out of the Napoleonic scene, drawing perpetual self-satisfaction from the fortitude she so markedly possessed, to which fortitude it was her pleasure constantly to draw the onlooker's attention.

As we work backwards from Napoleon to his parents, certain of his characteristics become visible in the raw, lying about as it were uncoordinated. On his father's side there was the restless ambition to cut a figure, the love of show, the intense egotism, the eagerness to experiment in new directions, the literary bent: on his mother's, there was a physical organism working like a dynamo, a natural wisdom, an insight into first causes, family loyalty, a florid imagery, a ceaseless energy, a craving to domineer. This was the nursery garden in which that extraordinary efflorescence which was to be made manifest in Napoleon had many of its logical roots.

From Laetitia we turn to another Corsican woman, her contemporary and friend, Madame Permon, the second woman whom Napoleon wished to marry, and the one whom in later years he

said he considered the most beautiful he had known. Madame Permon was a virtuoso in the art of living. She had about her a flickering-sunlight quality that was wholly delightful, with, beneath, a self-assurance and strength of character that no-one could browbeat. Her boast was that she had only read one book in her life, *Télémaque*, but she possessed qualities that are not to be acquired by reading. Her personality was eminently suited to the Paris of the eighteenth century to which her French husband introduced her : her wilfulness, her repartee, her goddess-airs were all delightedly pandered to by the men who inevitably clustered about her. Certainly, as she moves about the pages of her famous daughter's memoirs there are moments when one feels it would perhaps have been better if she had read more books than *Télémaque*. But these moments are rare.

The Permons had one son, Albert, a year or two older than Napoleon, and two daughters. The second one, Laure, was no ordinary child. Behind that all but plain face with its jutting nose there popped about as quick an intelligence as that of any little girl in France. She was to become the wife at fifteen of one of Napoleon's Generals and closest friends, Junot, and later still, as author of *Mémoires de Madame la Duchesse d'Abrantès*, was to act as one of the many Boswells to Napoleon.

When, in 1784, Napoleon left Brienne and came to l'École Militaire in Paris the Permons laid themselves out to look after him. The name, Napoleon, now stamped on the world in embossed letters, meant at that time nothing more to the Permons than the Christian name of one of the Bonaparte boys who happened to be in Paris for his military training, and to whom, for the sake of old Corsican days, they wished to be kind.

Napoleon had arrived in Paris from Brienne one day in October, and it happened to be a brother of Madame Permon, Demetrius de Comnène, who was the first of the family to see him. De Comnène was out walking, and suddenly, by the Palais Royal, saw this weedy Bonaparte boy of fifteen standing looking about him. De Comnène told his sister afterwards, "I met him by the Palais Royal where he stood gaping about him, staring all round, nose in air". De Comnène asked him to dinner ; but it could not have been a pleasant evening for the

elder man, as he described his young friend afterwards to the Permons as being "pretty morose", while his chief topic of conversation seems to have been the annoyance he felt at his fellow cadets' expensive way of living. Then (whether this year or the next is not clear) it was the Permons' turn to entertain him. Madame Permon's sensitivity in the way she chose and put on her clothes extended to the drapings and the furnishings of the charming *intérieur* she had woven round her family. From his own threadbare home Napoleon had passed to the Brienne school, and from there to l'École Militaire, and probably the Permons' were the only well-furnished rooms that he had ever seen, their Aubusson carpet the first he had trodden. His reaction to awareness of anything desirable that he did not himself possess was never favourable, and the Permons found him a difficult guest. Albert Permon had inherited much of his mother's seduction. Albert knew how to talk, how to dress, how to dance, how to charm, how to play the harp, how to drive his father's cabriolet: in a word he was a young *élégant* of the period Louis XVI. Confronted with all this suavity Napoleon instantly took fright, and fell back on hostility. If he could not make an impression by being a success he could at least impress by showing his capacity for being disagreeable. Albert was puzzled by finding in Napoleon "a sort of acrimony, a bitter irony". Years later, Laure Permon, then the Duchesse d'Abrantès, would stop in the street and gaze up at the window of the little room where had sometimes stayed as their guest the man who had since run his terrific career. "When now", she writes, "I go along the Quai Conti, I can't help looking up at a garret at the left angle of the house, on the third floor. That is where Napoleon used to sleep whenever he came to stay with my parents. It was a very pretty little room. Albert's was at the side of it."

The reason for this 'acrimony' and 'bitter irony' that so puzzled the good-natured Albert Permon is not hard to find. One has only to look at the contrast between his young host's life and Napoleon's, which now, at l'École Militaire, was even worse than in his early days at Brienne. It was the same thing over again, but intensified. Himself one of the *boursiers* among boys of whom many were drawn from the aristocratic and moneyed

classes, he was daily confronted with the lacerating disparity between his own position and that of these plumaged cadets with their valets, their three-course dinners, and their horses ; these young men so full of themselves, of their own importance, of their own expensive way of living. What chance among them had this gawky provincial boy, giving his opinion on subjects that were to them essentially boring ? What bitterness to Napoleon to see this daily display of what he called " indecent luxury " when his mother could not even afford to send him those parcels of home-made clothes till he had first sent her the money for their carriage : when he was himself so pressed for a few coins that he was forced sometimes to write to Laetitia reminding her that she had not yet refunded him the three or the six francs he had lent her ! Napoleon was of the type to whom any sense of personal belittlement is insufferable, therefore the very existence of these dandified cadets, forced as he was into daily companionship with them, was a humiliation. And it was not only the contrast between these boys' opulence and his own poverty : his nature, at once sensitive and violent, was bruised by this group's social superiority. Napoleon's grandfather, Joseph Buonaparte, had received from the Grand Duke of Tuscany a recognition of gentility and a right to bear the Buonaparte arms ; but those Buonaparte arms were, from the point of view of heraldry, a sad mess, and, in spite of this publicly acknowledged gentility, and the fact that Laetitia was descended from the Counts of Collato, *magnificos* of Florence, Napoleon came undeniably from a rough, ill-bred household. Notwithstanding, it was an idiosyncrasy of all the Bonapartes to have an immensely good opinion of themselves, and not one of them had a better than Napoleon. He was too arrogant to develop a sense of inferiority, but this painful knowledge of a social superiority he did not himself possess left an indelible mark on his mind, and a perpetual urge to erase it.

So now the hourly presence of this showy group acted on his sensibilities like a corrosive. He could not snatch these moneyed boys' expensive food away from them, nor incontinently murder their valets, but he could make himself unpleasant, he could perpetually criticize everyone and everything, which he did so energetically that the heads of the school began to complain to

Monsieur Permon of the impossibility of anyone getting on with him, saying that " he found fault with everything ".

Laure Permon was at this time only a small child, but when she was older her mother told her of a final incident that brought Napoleon's sense of mortification to a head. He had one day driven with Madame Permon and Monsieur de Comnène to the girls' school at Saint Cyr where his sister, Marianne, was a *boursier* in the same way as he himself was at l'École Militaire. The moment they saw Marianne it was evident that something had gone wrong. Gradually it was extracted from her that she too was suffering from being one of the dispossessed forced to keep company with the opulent. A farewell *gouter* was to be given to a pupil about to leave, and Marianne, called on for her contribution, had not the wherewithal to comply. Madame Permon solved her predicament with a few coins ; but she noticed how lacerated Napoleon was by the incident. Here was another member of his family put into what seemed to him an intolerable position, and, no sooner were he and the Permons back in their carriage, than he burst into invective against the detestable administration of institutions such as Saint Cyr and his own military college. De Comnène, annoyed at the boy's bitterness, told him incisively what he thought of him. Napoleon left the subject for a time, but was too wrought-up to leave it for long, and soon he was at it again. " At last ", writes Laure Permon, " his language became so offensive that my uncle said, ' Keep quiet, it's not suitable that you who are being brought up on the King's charity should talk like this.' "

The King's charity ! The atmosphere in the carriage became tense. Madame Permon said afterwards that she thought Napoleon would choke. " I'm not a pupil of the King," he said, and his voice shook, " I am a pupil of the State."

" A nice distinction ! " retorted de Comnène.

It would be to understand Napoleon very little to think that this year he spent at l'École Militaire would slide from his mind and be forgotten. He forgot nothing. Even a good-natured laugh at his expense was carefully put away in a niche in his mind, labelled and docketed. One such incident, minute in itself but of value in the light it throws on his character, happened when, after

a year in Paris, he passed into the artillery, and was leaving to join his regiment at Valence. Before doing this he went to stay with the Permons. Their eldest girl, Cécile, a child of twelve or thirteen, who was being brought up at a convent, happened to be home on a visit. There came the day when Napoleon was to put on his uniform for the first time. In consequence he was "in great spirits". The uniform on — high military collar, epaulettes on shoulders, white buttoned-back revers, sword at side, and top-boots — he presented himself in the *salon* for the Permons' inspection. But he had not considered the effect his thin legs would have in what appear to have been particularly large military boots. "They were so noticeably big", writes Laure in later years, "that his little legs, then intensely thin, were lost in their amplitude. One knows how a mere nothing will strike a child as ridiculous: as soon as my sister and I saw him come into the room with his two legs dressed out in this fashion we could not contain ourselves, and there followed wildest laughter."

Napoleon became angry. Cécile, still giggling, remarked that now he had put on his sword he ought to be *le chevalier des dames*, and that he was very fortunate in having her to bandy jokes with.

This was too much for Napoleon. "Anyone can see that you are merely a little *pensionnaire*!" he shot at her.

"As for you," Cécile tossed back, "you are only a Puss in Boots!"

The room rang with Permon laughter. Even Madame Permon did not conceal the fact that she thought her daughter's witticism delicious. "I should find it difficult", writes Laure Permon, "to describe the rage Napoleon was in." At the moment he said nothing further, but a few days later he gave Laure a toy that he had had specially made for her, a Puss in Boots running in front of the Marquis de Carabas in his coach; while for Cécile there was a charmingly bound copy of the story of Puss in Boots itself. Here, in these presents, was a riposte to the Permon laughter, something to throw dust in their eyes. But Madame Permon was herself a psychologist. She eyed the beautifully bound book: she eyed the expensive toy: her quick mind compared the outlay with the giver's narrow purse. "The story-book is too much,

Napoleon," she remarked ; " if you had just bought Loulou the toy, that would have been very well, but giving Cécile the story-book shows that you are annoyed with her." But the interest of the incident lies in the finale, when Napoleon was French Consul. Laure Permon (then Madame Junot) one day made some airy reference to this Puss-in-Boots toy. " I shall never forget ", she writes, " the First Consul's face." Later, Napoleon came up to her and, pinching her nose so that she cried out, exclaimed, " You're witty, you little pest, but you're malicious. Don't be that. A woman who is feared has no charm."

What is significant is that about ten years had elapsed since the original Puss-in-Boots joke.

When we next meet the Permon family after that early incident the minds of all of them have been furrowed with experiences of the most harrowing description. Waves of revolutionary disorder, sinister, incalculable, had surged through the Paris streets, and, gradually, these ever-mounting waves had attained the quiet, the cosy family interior of the Permons' home.

To ourselves, accustomed to the savagery of our own era, forced to witness horror upon horror until our emotions, perpetually assaulted, have almost lost their power of reaction, the French Revolution, as we read of it, does not come with a sense of stupefaction, as of something phenomenal, as it came to those who lived through it. To those who experienced it, it was not only phenomenal : they were racked with the dreadful possibilities of every hour.

It was the year 1792, and Napoleon, still very thin, an altogether seedy-looking young soldier of about twenty-two, was for a few months again in Paris, and, as before, coming in casually to the Permons.

Laure Permon's father early one morning was shaving. The door was flung open, and a rough fellow — who, formerly refused work by the Permons, had a grudge against them — burst in, and began shouting at him, " What is your age ? What are your *qualités* ? What was the reason of your journey to Coblentz ? " Permon asked to see the man's mandate for this interrogation. He refused to show it. The scene between the two

men flared higher. Madame Permon came in and drew her husband into another room, while his gloating guest made out a report. Laure, now a child of about eleven, seeing her father "pale and trembling with anger", her mother and sister in tears, crept away by herself to the *salon* and herself began to sob. "I was feeling very wretched when I saw Napoleon Bonaparte come into the room. He held my hand, and, very much concerned, asked me what was the matter. I told him what had happened. He at once went and knocked at the door of my father's study."

"But," exclaimed Napoleon when he had heard all the details, "But it's horrible! . . . infamous! . . . I'll see to it, leave it to me," and he was gone. He did everything possible, but, coming back later, he told the Permons there was such excitement everywhere he could not get anyone to listen sufficiently calmly to take in what he said. A few days later, Permon, hearing he was to be arrested, fled with his wife to the south coast, while Laure and her sister were scurried off to a girls' school.

Finally, in 1795, when Paris had become, if not normal, at least possible to live in, the Permons returned, settling themselves in an *appartement* that looked onto a garden, in the Hôtel de la Tranquillité in the Rue des Filles-Saint-Thomas. Here, the day after they arrived, Napoleon came to see them.

When Laure had last seen him she was a small child; now she was an astute little girl of eleven, and she tells us how, happening to look out of the window, she saw this lean angular young man crossing the courtyard of their house with his "clumsy and indecisive" walk, a dilapidated little round hat crammed down over his eyes, untidy, carelessly powdered hair straying over the collar of his grey redingote, his badly fitting boots badly cleaned, his dirty hands ungloved; for, as he told the Permons, to buy gloves "was an unnecessary expense". Though to Laure this young man who came into the room was not a stranger but an intimate, yet it was the first time she felt fully interested, noting that he was not only untidy and shabby but, with his bony, yellow face "all angles and points", was in her eyes definitely ugly. All the same, "I was", she says, "struck by his face without being able to explain why", and she tries to put into words the pene-

trating charm that she felt whenever she caught his smiling glance.

Madame Permon began to talk of how badly she thought his fellow Corsican, Salicetti, had treated him. "An indefinable smile passed rapidly over Bonaparte's lips. 'He wanted to harm me,' he said, 'but *my star* would not let him.'" It must have been difficult at that moment, looking at this gloveless, unkempt young soldier, to think that he was under the patronage of any beneficent planet. This perhaps struck him himself, for he added, "All the same I must not boast about this star, for what will be my future?" The child still remembered, when a woman, "the expression of his face as he said these last words. He was deeply moved." For those grimy hands were only too symbolic of his poverty: his cry "What will be my future?" the final expression of twenty-five years' scarcely interrupted experience of bruised susceptibilities and battered hopes. That impoverished air, that young face haggard and thinned by the fevers that had followed the few successful weeks of his career — these alone were the outcome of all his youthful strivings and assiduities. Aware of his own brilliance, he was aware too of the uselessness of his capabilities when he had nothing to expend them on. Behind him as he sat there talking to Madame Permon and her little girl in their charming room that looked onto the leafy quiet of the garden there lay in his mind, stretched away behind him, all the lacerating experiences of his young life. There had been those miserable early days at Brienne — though, later, he looked back on his time there with affection. There had followed Paris and l'École Militaire — a worse crucible of suffering. Then he had had the experience of being a sixteen-year-old sub-lieutenant in the artillery at Valence with pay that only amounted to about forty-five pounds a year. Here his keenness and his startling ability were recognized by his superiors; but he and his brother officers did not coalesce. The dictatorial way in which Napoleon gave his views on ancient and modern governments; his contempt for other people's opinions; his individual outlook — none of this was likely to make him popular. At once profound and provincial, scintillating and pedantic, he was an arrival in their midst of whom they could make nothing. On his side Napoleon

despised them. "The ways of the men among whom I live, and shall probably always live, are as different from mine as moonlight from sunlight." Such was his summing-up after fourteen months of regimental life. However, not all his hours were gloomy. He got to know the bourgeois society around him : had a gentle idyll at Valence with a little person called Caroline du Colombier, whom he would meet at dawn on cherry-eating expeditions : and in the solitude of his lodgings drew sustenance from Rousseau's *Contrat Social*. But the crowding demands of his temperament could not be assuaged merely by bourgeois society, Rousseau, and the companionship of a cherry-eating little girl. He was oppressed by a sense of isolation. "Always alone though in the midst of men", he wrote bitterly : and the thought of suicide crossed his mind. However, a pleasanter alternative offered. In four months he would be able to go on leave to Corsica, and stay with his family whom he had not seen for eight years. He decided for Corsica.

To all Corsican families solidarity is one of their strongest sentiments, an emotion shared by Napoleon to the full. His father was dead, but his mother and brothers and sisters formed a group whose interests, or what later he chose to consider their interests, were to be his. Beneath his intolerant manner lay unexpected capabilities of tenderness : at this period of his life companionship and affection were intensely dear to him, and it seems to have been now that he developed that devotion to his mother which was to last till he passed into his worldly phase. He, her own offspring, understood her rugged nature, and did not, so far, wince away from it ; and now, during his time at home, she must often have seen that enchanting smile which suffused his face when some idea pleased him, a smile that was one of his chief seductions. In this sympathetic atmosphere his hitherto embittered mind began to unfold and burgeon : he became open to the lure of the country : the mountains up which the goats scrambled, the slow sinking of the sun into the sea, "into the bosom of the infinite" as he wrote in an effort to give voice to his emotion. This was, with him, no mere 'love of the country' : it was something more profound. The sweet-stretching solitudes of nature, at once so aloof and so intimate, stirred the incorporeal

side of him, and, later, he was to remark how in the open air he felt the boundaries of his mind expand, his mental activities quicken. All his life it is noticeable how, whenever possible, he did his work out of doors.

Several years later Napoleon wrote a novel, *Clisson et Eugénie*, which is undoubtedly closely autobiographical. Certain passages in this manuscript seem to refer to this, or, possibly, to other times a little later, when he was staying in Corsica. These passages reveal states of reverie, of human love touched with, and passing into, a higher state of consciousness. "Sometimes," Napoleon writes of Clisson, "on banks silvered by the star of love, he would give himself up to the desires and throbbings of his heart. He could not tear himself away from the sweet and melancholy spectacle of the night, lit by the moon. He would remain there till she disappeared, till darkness effaced his reverie. . . . Reverie would take the place of thought. He would notice with hitherto unknown pleasure all the diversities of nature, the beginning and the end of the day, the song of birds, the murmur of water, the carpeted fields. . . . He would spend entire hours meditating in the depths of a wood, and in the evening he would remain there till midnight, lost in reveries by the light of the silver star of love."

"The reflection of all this on his mind made him realize that there are other sentiments than those of war, other inclinations than those of destruction. The ability to nourish men, to raise them up, to make them happy is of far more value than the ability to destroy them";¹ and he speaks later of the music of Poesiello, "which only pleases sensitive minds, whose melody transports and impassions minds made to feel acutely". Verbally barren and cliché-ridden though this manuscript is, yet the matter itself and the corrections and re-writings seem to prove that he was in travail to give expression to some powerful stirring of mind, some enlargement of consciousness that bordered on the mystic. It is

¹ This extract is taken from M. Émile Dard's quotations from *Clisson et Eugénie* that appeared in his article *Napoléon Romancier* in the *Revue des deux Mondes*, 15th November 1939. The original manuscript of *Clisson et Eugénie*, of thirteen pages, was in the possession of the Polish State. It is feared that from enemy action it is now probably destroyed.

the awakening of a peculiarly sensitive adolescent to emotions in part amative, in part cosmic. And yet, with him, not the emotions of an adolescent only, for we have already seen him passing into these reveries as a comparatively small boy, and they were to continue into, and gradually pass away during, his consular days.

Napoleon's family were now on the verge of bankruptcy, and Lætitia, whose education did not go so far as the adding-up of accounts, was hardly fitted to deal with a financial crisis. In the hope of obtaining for her some monetary concession from the Government, Napoleon went to Paris ; but within a few months was back again in Corsica.

It appears to have been about this time that he wrote a story which, later, Tom Moore worked up as *The Veiled Prophet of Khorassan*. It is one of those nightmare stories dipped in a bugaboos-oriental atmosphere that filled the place in those days which the detective novel does in ours. The theme is that in the year 160 of the Hegira there appeared an unknown man who, professing to be a prophet, gathered round him a multitude of followers. Some loathsome disease so disfigured his face that he always wore a silver mask ; this mask, however, was so subtle that it only increased his charm. He appears to have turned rapidly from prophet into Generalissimo, for he scored some striking victories in Asia over the Commander of the Moslems. However, his luck turned, and finding he would inevitably fall into the hands of his enemies, he decided, instead, to stage a grand finale for himself and all concerned. Barrels of poisoned wine were got ready, and trenches dug, which were then filled with quicklime. He persuaded his followers to drink the wine, and then threw their bodies, some dead, some drunk, into the trenches. He then fired the alcohol, and completed the holocaust by himself jumping into the flames. No one escaped except a slave girl who had been his concubine. The story ends with the exclamation : " To what extremities will not the rage of self-glorification thrust a man ! "

No one, reading this, can help envisaging the silver mask as Napoleon's smile which hid the relentless egoism beneath ; the poisoned wine as the conquest-obsession with which he filled the minds of his followers ; the quicklime as the Russian snows in which thousands were to perish ; the hero himself jumping into

the flames as Napoleon's own political self-destruction ; the surviving slave-girl concubine as Marie Louise, whose rôle in Napoleon's life was nearly that of a bought slave. The whole story was, most strangely, an unconscious and macabre self-prophecy.

Napoleon did not rejoin his regiment, now at Auxonne, till the June of 1788. There now followed seven years composed chiefly of straining endeavour. While in garrison, his mind turned more and more inward, and his spare time was spent in making multitudinous notes from books on history, religion, geography, and social customs. That avid curiosity — a curiosity to last all his life — which made him want to drill into the heart of every subject, was strengthening daily. Then his investigating mind drew near to past civilizations, and absorbed them : Persians, Scythians, Thracians, Athenians, Spartans, Egyptians, and Carthaginians came to life again before him, and, indefatigably, his mind assessed, his pen noted. Then he himself began seriously to write, working at a history of Corsica. He started to read novels : these, so he said, " interested me passionately. I tried to write some : this occupation gave freedom to my imagination. . . . In thought I launched myself into an ideal world, and I tried to find in what way it differed precisely from the world where I found myself."

It seems there must have been a literary bacillus in the Bonaparte blood, as not only Napoleon but his brothers Joseph, Lucien, and Louis all wrote. Joseph published a short novel ; Lucien wrote poems and tragedies ; Louis, a novel. Marianne, too, wrote a novel, and she and Joseph both surrounded themselves with the *litterati*.

When, later, Napoleon was again back in Corsica, he immersed himself in revolutionary politics and organized the Municipal Guard. His whole position was equivocal. Outwardly he wore the uniform of an officer of Louis XVI's army : inwardly he was a rebel Corsican eager for the complete detachment of the island from France. No situation could have been more galling, more likely to falsify a boy's character.

In the May of 1792 he was in Paris. He found it in a ferment.

"Paris is in the greatest convulsion", he wrote. "It is inundated with strangers." His old friend, Bourrienne, of Brienne days, was there, and he and Napoleon fell into the habit of meeting every day to go for a walk. Napoleon began to drop in, familiarly as before, on the Permons. "I dined yesterday with Monsieur Permon", he wrote at the beginning of June; "Madame is very amiable, loves her country dearly, and loves to have Corsicans about her." It may have been during these visits to the Permons in the early part of the summer that he and Laure would stand up together in the middle of the room and dance the *Monaco* and *Les Deux Coqs* while Cécile struck off the tune for them on the piano. For beneath Napoleon's sombreness, his moments of inaccessibility, there lay a permanent quality of light-heartedness which, most incongruously, was to burst into perhaps its fullest flower during his first weeks at St. Helena.

Returning to Corsica in the autumn he associated himself with the French Commissioner and anti-Paolist, Salicetti, and though at first professing adherence to Paoli, finally set himself in opposition to him, and declared openly for the French. It is impossible not to suspect that his boyish enthusiasm for the cause of his island had gradually turned into the more mature enthusiasm for self-advancement, and that he realized that this necessitated his linking himself with the forces of the French Revolution. But his actions at this period not only bewildered Paoli ("The behaviour of Bonaparte is too puzzling to be unravelled", he wrote) but have been a field of speculation for every historian since.

The final result of Napoleon's activities in Corsica was that in the spring of 1793 he realized that his position was now untenable. His behaviour had, too, brought on his whole family a threat of arrest, and he and they were forced to set sail for the French coast.

What a group that was which in the June of 1793 scrambled out of the boat at Toulon! So far merely an unimportant provincial family escaping to France for their lives, homeless, penniless, a Corsican attorney's outcast brood. But that knot of people — including the two youngest children, for the present left behind — were to become, one, Emperor of the French and King of Italy; and all the others, as either kings, queens, princes,

princesses, or cardinal, to form part of the spectacle of European history. As they all stepped on shore, France little realized what a virus was at that moment being injected into her ancient veins.

But these dazzlements belonged to the future. For the time the family settled in the south of France, living on the small sums meted out to Corsican exiles by the Republic.

In the August of this year Napoleon published *Le Souper de Beaucaire*. This now famous pamphlet was, in part, his first attempt to square his conscience. It is noticeable that all through his life, in one form or another, he made similar attempts. *Le Souper de Beaucaire* contains another of his self-prophecies. "Believe me, a man will appear who will know how to unite in his own person all the hopes of the nation, and then . . ."

This autumn Napoleon, in command of the artillery, took part in the siege of Toulon. Here his extraordinary efficiency brought him into notice. But this success did not save him from being twice placed under arrest for suspected military indiscretions. He attributed his second arrest, when he was imprisoned at Antibes, in large measure to professional jealousy on the part of Salicetti; also, the Robespierres having meanwhile been guillotined, Napoleon's intimacy with that family put him in bad odour. If Napoleon's moral sense can scarcely, even in his early days, be described as keen, he did have, as a young man, a sharp awareness of loyalty, both in the giving and the receiving, and the part Salicetti played in his arrest was one of the major disillusionments of his youth: it probably had much to do with his bitter cry, "Men are so contemptible!" To his own way of thinking, Salicetti had broken his career; and it was now that Napoleon exclaimed to the Permons, "In the morning of my life he bruised my future. He dried up my ideas of fame on their stalk." However, after some weeks of imprisonment he had been set at liberty, his services being needed as General in command of the artillery in an expedition to Corsica against the English. This expedition of March 1795 was a failure. If the French troops had succeeded in landing in Corsica, here would have been Napoleon's chance of reinstating himself, of making his mark: but the English had got across his path. This incident probably started

that vindictive irritation in his mind against the English which was to increase with the years.

After the Corsican disaster, he found himself transferred as Brigadier-General to the army of La Vendée which was engaged in crushing the peasant Royalists. He was so disgusted at being transferred from artillery to infantry that he determined to go to Paris in the hope of obtaining a withdrawal of the order. Therefore, in the May of 1795, he set off there accompanied by two men who were both his friends and staff officers, Marmont and Junot. He also took with him his younger brother, Louis, whom he had had with him at Auxonne, himself educating the child. But those who knew Louis when he had grown up, a morose, often ailing young man, considered that the combined effects of his elder brother's strenuous discipline and bad cooking had not been fortunate.

From the upheavals of the Revolution an extraordinary flotsam and jetsam of humanity had floated to the surface, and now displayed itself in the Paris streets. The old order and the new mingled in the spring sunshine. The middle classes and the tradesmen, swiftly acquiring, swiftly spending money, were busily trying to learn how to become aristocratic, at intervals advertising this ambition by the most astounding fêtes and balls. The precariousness of all this display, with famine making hideous the Paris alleys, only forced the pace more feverishly, and if the starving and the sansculottes did straggle out of their back streets, the National Guards were there to drive them back. Robespierre and his statues of Avarice, Discord, and Selfishness were things of the past. The Parisians' sense of humour was no longer assailed by the sight of Barras in his feathered hat holding a bunch of flowers, fruit, and corn in his hand in an endeavour to emphasize the fact that a Supreme Being exists. This year the tilt of the vernal solstice had brought not only a burgeoning to the plants and the bushes, the chestnuts and the may-trees in the Champs Élysées, but a mounting sap that had permeated the whole social life of Paris. Carriages like scallop-shells, slung high above their filigree springs, went swaying up and down the streets, passing from sunshine into rectilinear shadows, and out again into sunshine ; in the courtyards those potted shrubs that were then

the fashion made pleasant shapes of darkness in the limpid air ; lilac and laburnum hung lushly over garden walls, pressed fragrantly against the wrought-iron railings of little balconies ; men and women dressed in clothes that to us would look as if they had been taken out of the glass cases of a museum, sauntered along eyeing each other's extravagance of feather and striped silk, of flippantly-cut coat and tasselled cane. In contrast to these exquisites, several hundred young men had chosen to emphasize the republican spirit by dressing themselves in togas, and at any street corner a knot of them might be seen discussing politics, enveloped in their white, scarlet-edged draperies.

After the strenuousness of revolutionary days, French women had come into their own : " men are mad about them," Napoleon wrote to his brother Joseph during this summer, " think only of them, live only by them and for them. A woman needs six months of Paris to realize what is her due."

Paris had adopted an incredible attitude to the now vanished Terror, treating it as a risible nightmare which it was now amusing to poke fun at. This pose became so macabre that balls would be given to which only those were allowed to come who could bring a *bona-fide* former death-warrant of some relative. The dancers at these balls would get themselves up in clothes to look as much as possible as if they were on the scaffold, and there was practised a special jerk and fall of the head, reminiscent of a head severed by the guillotine, which gave pleasure to all.

Into this gaudy Paris arrived Napoleon with barely a penny in the pocket of his worn redingote. Joseph appears occasionally to have sent him a little money, but in the cheap lodging, which he shared with Junot, it appears to have been Junot who chiefly paid ; Junot, that hearty young general with the sabre-scarred face whom Napoleon referred to as " full of fire, and, above everything else, full of friendship for me ". Towards evening the two young men would often set out for a walk arm in arm ; for it was a time when everyone in the streets of Paris as well as in London invariably linked themselves in this fashion. Thus clamped together, Napoleon and Junot would pursue their way along the pavements, down the boulevards, along by the Chinese baths. Sometimes as they strolled along they would hear, coming

up behind them, the decisive trotting of a well-bred horse, and looking up would see, flaunting by, a youthful rider, powdered, scented, arrogant. At once all Napoleon's old exasperation at the extravagant military cadets would flare up and, under his breath, he would be heard cursing the rider; and if he and Junot happened to be sitting down when one of the *Incroyable* young men passed by on foot — exquisite long pale-grey coat, high collar and green cravat, hair held up at the back with a comb, and two long strands called *oreilles de chien* falling each side of the face — then Napoleon would spring to his feet with such intentional violence that his chair would crash over onto the offender's legs. For when his emotions boiled he always had to give them some physical outlet: control of his hands was a thing he never acquired; those fingers, now bony, later to become so white and cushiony that their appearance belied their strength, always shot out to avenge the annoyance in his mind.

Often on these evening walks he and his friend would turn in at the gate of the Jardin des Plantes. There, says Junot, "we breathed not only a purer air but in passing over the threshold of the *grille* we seemed to throw off a heavy burden, so peaceful and pleasant was the whole atmosphere". But if Napoleon's mind was soothed for a few moments by this flower-scented place, at the bottom of his mind lay the bitter concern for his future that had made him cry out to Madame Permon, "What is to become of me?" If he looked back he saw only the rough passage of those twenty-five years that had ended in him and his family losing their home, and becoming exiles: just when, so he considered, he had been about to make a name for himself, there had intervened that disastrous arrest: now, nearly penniless, he was merely one of a number of young Corsican officers in the Republican army; and, further, he was under orders to undertake a duty which he was evading.

When he had arrived in Paris he brought with him a locket in which was a neat twist of hair from the head of Désirée Eugénie Clary,¹ the daughter of a rich soap merchant of Marseilles. Désirée was sister to Joseph's wife ("How fortunate he is, *ce coquin de Joseph*!"), and whether owing to her black eyes and

¹ Later, as the wife of Bernadotte, Désirée Clary became Queen of Sweden.

the charm of her sixteen years, or on account of her money, Napoleon had come to an understanding with her that they should marry. But this projected marriage had come to nothing. This must have further emphasized his present sense of frustration, for in this post-Revolution Paris that pursued its way so busily and luxuriously he had no part; he was completely left out; and in his desolation his thoughts turned to his absent family. "In whatever position fortune may place you," he wrote to Joseph about a month after his arrival in Paris, "you know well, *mon ami*, that you could not have a better friend than myself, one to whom you are dearer, and who wishes more sincerely for your happiness. Life is a slight dream that vanishes. If you go away, and think it will be for some time, send me your portrait: we have lived so many years together, so closely united, that our hearts are mingled, and you know better than anyone how entirely mine is yours. In tracing these lines I feel an emotion which I have seldom experienced in my life; I have a strong feeling that it will be a long time before we meet, and I cannot continue my letter." If proof were needed of the striking difference between the young Napoleon and the mature, it is shown in this letter. The sense of discouragement that underlies it so pressed on him during this summer in Paris that his thoughts again hovered around suicide. "I shall end by not getting out of the way when a carriage comes by", he wrote. But, miserable though he was, he was all the time doing everything he possibly could to help his relations. "You know", he wrote to Joseph, "I only live for what happiness I can give to my family."

During this period he went constantly to the Permons, finding there a sympathetic atmosphere in which to discuss his worries; and one day, desperate at the thought that his career was already ended, striking his forehead, he exclaimed, "'And I'm not yet twenty-six! . . . I'm not yet twenty-six.' . . . Then", says Laure Permon, "he gazed at my mother with the most miserable expression on his face."

In return for her sympathy Napoleon was always ready to do anything for Madame Permon. One night, in drenching rain, he tore out to fetch the doctor for her husband. "Bonaparte . . ." writes Laure, "said nothing. He was down the stairs at a run,

and went off to find Monsieur Duchannois whom he brought back with him in spite of his protests. The weather was dreadful, with driving rain. Bonaparte had not been able to find a fiacre to take him to Monsieur Duchannois, his coat was soaked. Yes, yes," she adds, "at that time Bonaparte had a heart capable of devotion."

She gives us a charming little scene another day : Napoleon arriving one morning before eleven o'clock holding in his hand a large bunch of violets. She noticed that his black stock was even more untidily knotted than usual. When Madame Permon came in he offered her the violets : whereupon there was a burst of that rather unfortunate Permon hilarity ; but, says Laure, "this gallantry was so unusual that we could not help laughing".

Napoleon's birthday in the middle of August, his twenty-sixth, came and went, and still no definite future had opened before him. September set in, and it seems probable that this was the time that Laure is referring to when she describes how Napoleon, "after having dined at our family table . . . would place himself in front of the fire, arms crossed over his chest, legs stretched out to the hearth", and say, "Signora Panoria, let us talk of Corsica, let us talk of Signora Laetitia." For Madame Permon, too, was a Corsican ; she too knew the mountains ; the long glades that ran between ; the silhouette of goats against the sky-line ; with her he could go back in thought to his childhood's home where alone he had, so far, known any sweetness of living. Now, as they all sat talking round the fire, Napoleon's long and often muddy boots stuck out to the fender, a smell, faint at first, then gradually strengthening till it became pungent, rose in the air — the combined odour of varnished boot-leather and drying mud as the heat of the fire worked into them. The effect was so nauseating that Madame Permon would sit, handkerchief pressed to nose, or, when the acrid smell became overpowering, would leave the room. In time Napoleon connected cause and effect, and on future visits would be heard urging the *femme de chambre* to scrape the mud off his boots before he went into the room. For he had developed an immense liking and admiration for this most lovely woman who, says her daughter, "was of an indescribable vivacity". Over his own powerful, pondering, and

now saddened mind this feminine animation played enchantingly.

This summer Napoleon got some work in the office of Pontecoulant, a member of the Committee of Public Safety : but his wish now was to go on a mission to Turkey, and to take service in the Sultan's army. Those in authority were in agreement, but, on the actual day that one department of the Committee gave him orders to proceed to Constantinople, the Central Committee deleted his name from the list of general officers on account of his not having taken up his command in La Vendée.

This was perhaps the lowest, the most despairing point he had yet touched. It was now the middle of September. But, as early as the first week in October, the door that led to his European career was to be flung wide.

The relations between the Paris malcontents and the Convention were becoming crucial, and on the 12 *Vendémiaire* it was evident that on the next day there would be an uprising. Several years later, when he was First Consul, Napoleon told Madame de Rémusat, "One evening I was at the theatre, it was the 12th *Vendémiaire*. . . . I heard people saying that the Assembly was *en permanence*. I hurried off there. I found nothing but confusion and hesitation. Suddenly, from the centre of the hall, a loud voice said, 'If anyone knows General Bonaparte's address, will he go and tell him he is expected at the Assembly's committee.'" Little though anyone among that distracted group of men realized it, that barely-noticed voice, uplifted for a moment above the hubbub in the hall, was the reveille for Napoleon's stupendous achievements.

Barras, one of the five Directors, had been given command of the troops, and he appointed Napoleon, among others, to serve under him. The next day, 5th October, was the one referred to by historians as the great day of *Vendémiaire*. The shock and boom of the guns Napoleon had advised being brought into action sounded down the Paris streets ; the rising was completely quelled, and Napoleon emerged a proved and valued soldier of the Republic. He was a made man.

"All is over . . ." he wrote to Joseph. "We have disarmed the sections, and all is quiet. As usual, I'm not the least hurt. Luck is on my side."

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This summer Napoleon got some work in the office of Pontecoulant, a member of the Committee of Public Safety : but his wish now was to go on a mission to Turkey, and to take service in the Sultan's army. Those in authority were in agreement, but, on the actual day that one department of the Committee gave him orders to proceed to Constantinople, the Central Committee deleted his name from the list of general officers on account of his not having taken up his command in La Vendée.

This was perhaps the lowest, the most despairing point he had yet touched. It was now the middle of September. But, as early as the first week in October, the door that led to his European career was to be flung wide.

The relations between the Paris malcontents and the Convention were becoming crucial, and on the 12 *Vendémiaire* it was evident that on the next day there would be an uprising. Several years later, when he was First Consul, Napoleon told Madame de Rémusat, "One evening I was at the theatre, it was the 12th *Vendémiaire*. . . . I heard people saying that the Assembly was *en permanence*. I hurried off there. I found nothing but confusion and hesitation. Suddenly, from the centre of the hall, a loud voice said, 'If anyone knows General Bonaparte's address, will he go and tell him he is expected at the Assembly's committee.' " Little though anyone among that distracted group of men realized it, that barely-noticed voice, uplifted for a moment above the hubbub in the hall, was the reveille for Napoleon's stupendous achievements.

Barras, one of the five Directors, had been given command of the troops, and he appointed Napoleon, among others, to serve under him. The next day, 5th October, was the one referred to by historians as the great day of *Vendémiaire*. The shock and boom of the guns Napoleon had advised being brought into action sounded down the Paris streets ; the rising was completely quelled, and Napoleon emerged a proved and valued soldier of the Republic. He was a made man.

"All is over . . ." he wrote to Joseph. "We have disarmed the sections, and all is quiet. As usual, I'm not the least hurt. Luck is on my side."

The next day Napoleon went round in the evening to the Permons. As he entered their room, his face "gay and open", his whole being at full flood with self-satisfaction, his buoyancy was confronted with a scene of emotional dishevelment: the news of his extraordinary good fortune was pushed away untold to the back of his mind as the realization came to him that Madame Permon's husband, already spent with illness, was dying from the effects of the very street fighting in which he himself had played such a spectacular part. When Napoleon discovered the reason why the faces of both mother and daughter were distorted with tears, "his gay and open expression", writes Laure, "changed at once. . . . He behaved wonderfully to my mother during these moments of grief. He was himself in a position that must have made all other interests seem unimportant. Well, all I can say is, he behaved like a son, a brother."

Two days later Monsieur Permon died, and Laure, her mother, and brother went to live in a small house in the *Chaussée d'Antin*. Cécile, the elder daughter, was now married.

No one could be more aware of the pleasure to be derived from trimming up a new house than was Madame Permon. Laure tells us the arrangement of a well-to-do woman's bedroom at that time. "A room for a bath was a necessity, as no elegant woman went for two days without bathing herself. And then an abundance of scents, the finest batistes and linens, the most valuable lace suitable for each season were on the dressing-table in the *sultans* — amber-coloured baskets trimmed with Spanish leather — which held the necessary things . . . for the toilet of a rich woman. . . . Rooms very fresh, odorous with flowers through the summer, and very warm, very closely shut up during the winter. As soon as the cold weather came, Aubusson carpets, several inches thick, were put down. A woman, coming back in the evening to her bedroom, would find it heated by a great fire in a vast fireplace, long draperies falling in front of the double windows; and the bed, surrounded with thick and ample curtains, was a refuge where she could prolong the night without the day disturbing her sleep."

Here, to the *Chaussée d'Antin*, Napoleon came every day as

usual, but, as Laure puts it, "it was no longer a question of muddy boots. Bonaparte went about only in a fine carriage, lived in a most comfortable house. . . . In a word he had become a person of importance, of value, and all without anything leading up to it, without a sound, as if by the wave of a wand. He came to see us every day in the same friendly, natural way. Sometimes he brought one of his aides-de-camp." For Napoleon had become, a week after the 13 *Vendémiaire*, Second in Command of the Army of the Interior and, about a fortnight later, its Commander-in-Chief.

Now, hoisted into power, he lost no time in showering benefits on his brothers. He applied for a consulship for Joseph ; acquired for Lucien the post of Commissary of War to the Army of the North ; had Louis appointed a lieutenant, and made him his aide-de-camp. The Bonaparte group were definitely beginning to take the stage. Another of Napoleon's immediate concerns was to see that the starving people of Paris were given food.

Compared with the dreary passage of the last few months, he stood now steeped in sunshine. Barras, the most outstanding of the five Directors, tells us how, after Napoleon had dined with him, he would exclaim, "'*Allons, citoyens* . . . let us mount our horses and go to the theatre to sing the *Marseillaise*, and reclaim the *Chouans* [anti-republicans].' He would clamber onto his great nag ; enormous hat feathered with the tricolour, the corners inverted ; boots turned up ; dangling sword bigger than himself — such was the get-up in which the General-in-Chief of the Army of the Interior presented himself at many theatres."

Some little time after the death of Laure Permon's father, Napoleon came to their house one Saturday and embarked on the most unexpected, the most surprising conversation with Madame Permon. There was no one else in the room, but, says her daughter, "my mother has told me so often about this singular scene that I know as much about it as if I had been the chief actress in it."

Napoleon began by saying he wished to bring about a marriage that would unite the two families, Madame Permon's and his, and therefore suggested that Albert should marry Napoleon's sister, Pauline, now a girl of fifteen. "This alliance", urged Napoleon,

"would make me happy. You know how pretty my sister is ! My mother is your friend. Come ! say yes, and the affair will be settled."

Madame Permon replied that Albert was his own master, and that the feasibility or otherwise of the plan depended entirely on him. Undaunted by this, Napoleon then went on to suggest that Laure should marry one of his brothers, either Lucien or Jerome. Madame Permon's inevitable laughter began to bubble, and she pointed out to Napoleon that Jerome, a boy of only eleven, was younger than Laure. "Really, my dear Napoleon," she exclaimed, "you are acting the high priest today — you are marrying everybody, even children !" and she laughed again. Napoleon joined in — but seemed, she noticed, curiously embarrassed. He admitted that when he got up that morning he had felt blowing over him "a marriage breeze", and then, kissing Madame Permon's hand, he added "that he had decided to ask her to start the union between the two families by a marriage between herself and him as soon as *les convenances* of her widowhood would allow of it".

For a few moments Madame Permon stared in stupefaction at the young man. "Then", says Laure, "she started laughing with such abandon that we heard it in the next room." But Napoleon had meant what he said in all seriousness. "I want to marry," he remarked finally, and spoke, without giving her name, of some woman "of the Faubourg Saint-Germain", a woman who was "charming, good-natured, agreeable", whom his new Paris friends were anxious he should marry but whom his old friends were anxious he should not. But at the moment it was Madame Permon with her humming-bird quality that he desired. So, "I want to get married", he repeated, "and what I've suggested would suit me in many ways. Think it over." But Madame Permon could only quiver with laughter.

As he descended the little staircase, pricked with soreness at the hilarity he was leaving behind him, it might have been thought, seeing how he was now just about to rise from prominence to prominence, that this was the final rebuff of his youth. Actually, a far more injurious one lay in store.

If there was excuse for Madame Permon's risibility over such

a briskly arranged triple marriage, there was another side to it which was not risible. Though now, with gold galon on his hat, aides-de-camp at his side, his own house in the Rue Neuve des Capucines, and a showy carriage in which to drive, all outwardly was well with Napoleon, in the inner chambers of his mind his spirit was desolate. Later in life he admitted how much he valued, how much he had always wished for, home life. He might now, from motives of policy, profess himself entirely a Frenchman, pretend even, as he did one day to Madame Permon, that he was so completely French that he could no longer understand her when she spoke Italian (" *Allons donc*, Napoleon, don't be so ridiculous !"), but it is evident that at heart at this time he still suffered from his exile from Corsica, from the separation from his family, and the complete break-up of his Ajaccio home.

Three days before the Saturday on which Napoleon had proposed to Madame Permon, that is, on the Wednesday, she had asked him to get a commission in the Garde de la Convention for a young cousin of hers, Stephanopoli. Napoleon had said that he would. On the Friday, when she saw him again, she referred to this.

"I have", said Napoleon, "the promise of the Minister of War," and he added that he hoped the next day to bring her the commission himself.

The next day was, as Laure Permon puts it, "the unfortunate Saturday". On that day, after her mother had refused to marry Napoleon, she had asked — certainly a most ill-chosen moment — about her cousin's commission. Though Napoleon replied with "no bitterness, he did not seem quite as willing as the day before".

Madame Permon, noticing this change of manner, remarked, "Napoleon, at this moment there are two men in you. I beg you always to be the one I love and admire . . . do not let the other one get the upper hand." Napoleon merely frowned, and pushed his plate away irritably.

On the Monday morning he came round on horseback to see the Permons. He had several aides-de-camp with him, and when he came into the room they came too. Needless to say Madame

Permon at once opened up the subject of Stephanopoli's commission. Napoleon parried by saying he had promised it for "*the next day*".

In a moment the superimposed personality of the Paris *élégante* deserted Madame Permon, and the Corsican provincial in whose blood lay latent the spirit of the vendetta rose up. She accused Napoleon of vacillation. He protested that she was unjust. The young aides-de-camp were standing round, all eyes, all ears. Napoleon picked up his hat to go, and lifted up his hostess's hand to bestow a kiss. She pulled it away with such a jerk that she unintentionally gave him a buffet in the eye.

"What is done is done," she remarked; "for me words are nothing, action everything."

Napoleon tried again to take her hand, saying in a low voice, "Those young men are laughing at us. We are behaving like a couple of children."

Madame Permon merely folded her arms across her chest.

Napoleon "made a gesture more of impatience than a salute, and went out quickly". From that moment the intimacy between him and Madame Permon was at an end.

The unpleasantness of this scene was one Napoleon did not forget. Ten years later he talked about it to Laure Permon "with bitterness".

A few weeks after this quarrel the news percolated into the little house in the Chaussée d'Antin that Napoleon was going to marry the widow of Alexandre, Vicomte de Beauharnais.

EUROPE IS ASTOUNDED

IN the November of 1830, in a house in Rome, a woman in middle life, from whose whole person there emanated the air of an intimate of the *beau monde*, sat alone, bending over a large bound volume of manuscript. In the centre of each of its red, grained-morocco covers was stamped a gold H beneath the French imperial crown, and, beyond that again, a border of vine-leaves, grapes, and blades of corn. Perusing, considering, pondering, the reader occasionally picked up her pen, and for a few moments the quill twitched as she busily wrote on one of the script's margins. This solitary occupied figure was Queen Hortense, Josephine's daughter ; and in the pages she was poring over she saw a living picture of the past : of her own past, of her mother's, of Napoleon's, of life at the Tuileries in the days when they had all lived there. For this manuscript book contained Hortense's own memoirs, copied out by one of her Ladies, Mademoiselle Elisa de Courtin, and now, each day up to three o'clock in the afternoon Hortense would sit over it, absorbedly putting in the final notes and corrections.

When Napoleon, at the turn of 1795 into 1796, had first come into the lives of herself, her brother Eugène, and her mother, she had been a child of twelve or thirteen : her brother about two years older. Hortense's days were passed at Madame Campan's fashionable school at St. Germain, an enchanting eighteenth-century seminary where the most sweet-mannered pupil won the privilege of wearing an artificial rose on Sundays. Such place as was left over in Hortense's heart from this gentle seat of learning was occupied by her mother and Eugène. Josephine was at that time living at a house in the Rue Chantereine. Though small, it was a house of character and charm, a square, stone *pavillon* set back from the street, with a garden behind, and a semicircle of stables and coach-houses forming a courtyard in front. In these stables were the two black horses that drew Josephine's carriage,

horses which had come from the royal stables, and had been given her by Barras, whose mistress she had been. Stone lions stood each side of the front door, and, within, the small rooms were redolent of the luxury of the moment ; Josephine's bedroom being completely lined with mirrors that reflected back not only her graceful attitudes but, inappropriately enough, a bust of Socrates. In the little drawing-room the black and white of the prints on the walls went well with the blue-upholstered chairs. The dining-room was oval. All about the house there trotted a poodle called Fortuné : a poodle that has become historic owing to its having, on one occasion, had the temerity to bite Napoleon in the leg.

Hortense and Eugène considered there was no room in the lives of their mother and themselves for General Bonaparte. But this naturally had no effect on Napoleon. Hortense noticed that he came more and more often. She noticed, too, how amused her mother and her mother's friends were as he sat telling them ghost stories. The hostility the child secretly felt for Napoleon was not lost on him, and in consequence he began to tease her in a hurtful way, puzzling her simple mind by running down women in general, and even had the bad taste to twit her about going to her first communion. " You did, why shouldn't I ? " asked the child in all seriousness, and was bewildered by the burst of Napoleonic laughter that followed. But there is another figure of greater interest moving about in the candlelight in this intimate little room. Josephine's face is not entirely beautiful, but it has a drawing quality : it is a dryad face that the onlooker cannot resist watching, though possibly it is rather one which intrinsically possesses in its structure something that makes it appear interesting than one made so by the thoughts that stir behind. Her glance is slightly shuttered, enigmatic, indirect. She and Madame Permon had one talent in common, a perfect understanding in the choosing and wearing of their clothes. In fact, with Josephine, as with many otherwise not very intelligent women, her appearance was her chief outlet for self-expression, and her effects with the gauzes and laces, the cachemire shawls and the cameos of her day reached the point where cleverness becomes art. Napoleon himself was so keenly interested in, and so lynx-eyed concerning,



women's dress that he would have made an outstanding *couturier*. Josephine's greatest personal asset was something silken and soothing that, arising from her fundamentally quiescent disposition, was woven into her words, her attitudes, her movements. Her background was, and ever since she was fifteen always had been, socially brittle. As a child, the eldest of the three daughters of Monsieur de Tascher de la Pagerie, she had lived on her father's sugar plantation in Martinique : and within her mind there must always have remained the memory of the swooning heat of noon, the tropic nights of the island — that warm darkness as if lit with an interior glimmer, that soft microscopic chipper of a million crickets, and from far off in the negro quarter the low, perpetual beating of a tomtom. In fact this tropical atmosphere does seem always subtly to have permeated her ; and a something in the way she pronounced her words, a something that was Creole and not French, immensely added, avers a man who knew her, to her conversation : her powers of conversation being, it must be admitted, more profuse than brilliant.

In Martinique she had had a little feathery instruction at a West Indian convent — and her education was complete. This intellectual effort over, she appears to have spent most of her time lying in a hammock on her father's plantation in desultory conversation with the female negro servants. Above this chestnut-haired school-girl, lying all nonchalance in the sagging hammock, we see the spiky silhouettes of palm trees ; around her an entanglement of tropic vegetation ; and, grouped about the hammock, peering, envying, admiring, a cluster of negro girls, their woolly heads making black knobs against the lush green, their eyes sliding, their great cuts of mouths all a-grin.

During this adolescent period there had been a certain boy she used to play with a good deal. All we know of this boy, apart from the fact that he was susceptible to Josephine's nascent charms, is that his name was William and that he was the son of a neighbouring planter. It is difficult to be interested in such a mere outline, but, shadowy figure as he appears to us, he was to play an important part in Josephine's future.

From this tropical prelude Josephine was swept away by an adventurous aunt. This aunt, Madame Renaudin, ignoring the

fact that she was the wife of Monsieur Renaudin, had gone over to Paris and there become mistress to the Marquis de la Ferté Beauharnais. The Marquis on his side already had a wife, but she, like Monsieur Renaudin, was ignored. Madame Renaudin became indispensable to her French friend, and she formed and carried out the charming project that his second son Alexandre, then seventeen, should marry one of her Martinique nieces. Josephine, aged fifteen, was brought over by her father : the marriage took place in the December of 1779, and the young couple settled down with the Marquis and Madame Renaudin in his house in Paris in the Rue Thévenot. The marriage was not a success. The reciprocal complaints of Josephine and Alexandre were so involved, were so influenced by all the fine shades of the Beauharnais daily life of which we know nothing, that it is impossible to say where the blame lay. But a few features must be taken into consideration. Josephine, whose education had given her no compass by which to direct her course through life, had been brought over at the impressionable age of fifteen to live in an irregular household, and a household made so by her own aunt. She had been dependent for friends on those whom she now met in this new Paris world, and, needless to say, considering the Beauharnais group themselves, the morals of these friends were not of the strictest. They taught Josephine how to enjoy life in this Paris of Louis XVI, they taught her how to spend money. How much else they taught her is a matter of conjecture. Alexandre made the mistake of at first countenancing his wife's friends, and then suddenly taking objection to them. The young husband in fact decided on a family purge. This moral purge, involving as it inevitably did the woman who was at once his father's mistress and his wife's aunt, was not well received. The Beauharnais household turned against him, as did the Beauharnais' friends. There ensued recrimination ; then reconciliation ; only to be followed by further quarrels. In 1782 that elusive figure, William of Martinique, suddenly appeared in Paris, and Alexandre, now away with his regiment, and hearing Josephine was about to have her second child, denied his own paternity and pounced on William as the begetter. Finally, the question as to the small Hortense's paternity was brought before

the Parliament of Paris. The decision was in Josephine's favour. Alexandre, however, refused to return to her. During the Revolution, first he, then she, was arrested and sent to the Carmelite prison. Alexandre was guillotined, but after seven months Josephine was set at liberty.

She was at least alive, and she had her children : but, as extravagant in her tastes as she was generous, one thing she was always lacking in, and that was money. This lack was a constant anxiety, a ceaseless preoccupation, for in the group dominated by Barras into which she had now drifted money was the first consideration, and it was probably her need of it that made her become his mistress.

Barras, a Count from Provence, was now about forty, the most outstanding member of the Directory. Capable, dissipated, mendacious, he towered over the country. This post-Revolution group in which he set the pace was heterogeneous and gay ; superficially showy and fundamentally shoddy. The members of it demanded a high level of luxury, and their clothes and the decoration of their rooms reflected the newest fashions. It is symptomatic that whereas Madame Permon was still at the curtained-bed and Aubusson carpet stage, Josephine had progressed as far as mirror-lined walls and a bed-alcove with painted birds.

In after life Hortense remembered her first meeting with Napoleon when she went one evening with her mother to dine at Barras' house. " At table I found myself placed between my mother and a general who, so as to talk with her, kept on leaning forward with so much vivacity and perseverance that he tired me out and forced me to sit back. Therefore, in spite of myself, I had to study his face, which was good-looking, strongly expressive, but remarkably pale. He talked animatedly, and seemed entirely taken up with my mother." All this enthusiasm arose, as Napoleon himself admitted, because he was feeling flattered. Speaking at St. Helena of Josephine, and remarking what a great influence she had had on his life, he described the effect of her on him at this dinner. " I was not indifferent to the charms of women, but up to this time they had not spoiled me ; and my disposition made me shy in their company. Madame de Beauharnais was the first who gave me reassurance. She said flattering things to me about

my military talents. . . . This praise intoxicated me."

In this confession of Napoleon's that Josephine was the first woman "who gave me reassurance" one realizes his lack of social aplomb at this time. Among the seductive women who played such a prominent part at the moment he counted for nothing. There was certainly Madame Permon, but since he was fifteen she had been part of the texture of his life. In knowing her there was no sense of triumphant accomplishment such as there was in the exciting beginning of his friendship with La Vicomtesse de Beauharnais. His showy carriage might come swinging round the corner of the Rue Chantereine up to Josephine's door, but the young man who stepped out of it was still, socially, extremely self-diffident; his emotions still twisted and embittered by past experiences. He had still, as far as any sense of security lay in the constantly shifting political scene, his way to make.

As Napoleon was so attracted by Josephine directly he met her, the question arises why, shortly before he became engaged to her, did he propose to Madame Permon? Laure says that it was "a little later" after he had proposed to her mother that they heard he was going to marry Josephine, which suggests a few weeks or so between the two dates. To answer this question we must try to envisage Napoleon's feelings as regards Josephine in the days when they first met.

When they sat talking together on the blue-upholstered chairs in her little drawing-room they represented two social orders. Napoleon, the Corsican bourgeoisie whose pride lay in meeting the exertions that life demands; in respectability; in the begetting of children, and, above all, in the sentiment of family clanship, at the head of which stood the *chef de famille* to whom all the others were subservient. Another Corsican understanding was that each member of the family should help the others to his utmost. No one in the Bonaparte group subscribed to this principle more than did Napoleon. "My only happiness is in doing things for the family", he had written lately to Joseph: and his money, his influence, his time, his efforts were poured out on their behalf without stint. As opposed to this Corsican tribal world was Josephine's *milieu*, a *milieu* financed largely by the

contractors and stock-jobbers whom Barras, as head of the Directory, held in his hand. It was a *milieu* in which each woman had her lover ; where the first duty was to enjoy oneself, and the chief preoccupation how to pay the bills which this enjoyment entailed. Napoleon, enmeshed by Josephine, but not yet impressed as he was to be later, may well have hesitated before presenting his family with such an exotic. The very thought of the uncompromising Laetitia, accustomed to home-made clothes, in juxtaposition with Josephine, whose latest idea in the way of dress was flesh-coloured tights beneath a transparent muslin gown, was grotesque.

Barras, as Josephine's lover, had lately been supplying her with money, but all the same she was in debt : also Barras' affections were turning, or had already turned, from the doubtful good looks of Josephine to the definite beauty of Madame Tallien. We do not know for certain how much Napoleon realized of Josephine's past, nor is it certain exactly what, speaking morally, her past had been. In his memoirs Barras implies that she was practically a courtesan, but much of what he writes bears the very hall-mark of mendacity. The probability, however, seems to be that she had been General Hoche's mistress before she was Barras'. Nothing in her later life confirms the suggestion that she was promiscuous : in fact one gets the impression that before she met Napoleon she had given herself, rather desperately, first to Hoche and then to Barras, chiefly to keep herself and her children afloat. The group she had been brought up in saw nothing against these methods, and Josephine's temperament was essentially one that would always take the line of least resistance. Apart from how much or how little Napoleon knew of her past life, the fact that, though at once entranced by her, he yet, when it came to marriage, turned first to Madame Permon, shows how he realized that as far as common sense went he would be wiser to marry her than Josephine. That was at a date when he could reason calmly on the matter. However, as we have seen, Madame Permon refused him : and refused him in a manner that was galling. Added to that there was this misunderstanding between them over Stephanopoli. That intimate, that pleasant Permon interior which he had known for so long, to which he had now got

accustomed to going every day, had become as fatally sealed, as far as he was concerned, as before it had been invariably open. This shut door in the *Chaussée d'Antin* impelled him to the open one in the *Rue Chantereine*.

After Madame Permon's irrepressible laughter at the idea of him as a husband, after her intransigent attitude over the commission for her cousin, Josephine's suavity, her flatteries, that aroma of sweetness — which must have been something really exceptional, so much is it commented on by those who knew her — all this must have been as soothing to Napoleon as had been the *Jardin des Plantes* on stifling evenings of the Paris summer. Each day his awareness of her as a woman who was infinitely desirable increased : but at the same time he could not escape from a presentiment that if he married her she would bring him misery. "I felt it", he wrote to her, when the misery he had foreseen was upon him, "I felt it when my spirit became involved, when yours daily gained an unlimited empire, and subjugated all my senses." The penetrating quality of his feeling for her was something he had never experienced before, nor was ever to experience again. Ignoring his premonitions, he asked her to marry him ; and they became engaged. He was twenty-six : Josephine thirty-two. Once engaged, all his most tender susceptibilities unfurled themselves in the sunlit air engendered by his own emotion. Later, when he was submerged in egoism, become the victim of his own voluptuousness, coarsened by experience, all this elevation of feeling was to pass from him like a dream ; he was to speak of love with the ordinary cynicism of the disillusioned. But that was for the future.

Napoleon's life falls automatically into three phases : his early struggles ; his years of power ; his fall. He was so responsive to circumstances that to read of him in these three periods is as if one were reading of three different men. Josephine saw him now in his first phase, and she was not attracted. That lack of social sophistication, that sense he gave, despite his tenderness, of barely controlled violence, and, what she admits ought to have pleased her but did not, "the force of a passion of which he speaks with a vehemence which does not allow one to doubt of his sincerity" — the only effect of it all was to give her a general feeling of

discomfort. She found it, too, mentally exhausting that he seemed to want her to be "quite different from what I am". "I am frightened, I admit," she wrote to a friend, "at the ascendancy which he seems to want to exercise over everyone round him. His searching glance has in it something peculiar . . . imagine how he must intimidate a woman"; and she gives a neat school-girlish list of his assets — his courage, his knowledge, and the "vivacity of his mind"; but the volume and rarity of that mind were outside the scope of her intelligence. As for Napoleon's feelings for her, apart from her appeal to his senses, she possessed some elusive quality that was to him of the most exquisite value: she unconsciously revealed to him, she was impregnated with, some aspect of reality he did not himself possess.

Curiously enough for anyone so shrewd as Napoleon it seems never to have crossed his mind, accustomed as he was to the women of Corsica who looked on marriage as a vocation, that Josephine was accepting him as a husband in the same spirit in which she had accepted Barras as a lover; that is, merely as a man who would deal with her debts, and keep her and her children's heads above water: for it was round that fair-haired Hortense, that equally fair-haired Eugène, that Josephine's deepest affections circled.

Meanwhile Hortense, told nothing of how the relationship between her mother and Napoleon was progressing, was watching everything from the background and forming her own conclusions. "At last", she writes of Napoleon, "he seemed so admired in the little circle that I could not hide from my mother the fears that had taken possession of me. She combated them feebly. I wept, begging her not to remarry."

Sometimes when Napoleon went to see Josephine he would find himself *en petit comité* with the Duc de Nivernais, Monsieur de Montesquiou, and other royalist figures from the past; and then, undeterred by the presence of this republican, modernistic young General, the doors would be shut to other visitors, and a voice would murmur, "Let us talk about the old Court, let us take a walk round Versailles." Napoleon did not only listen to these reminiscent conversations — in which his only possible part could have been that of questioner — but something in him

responded to the world that these cosy nostalgic talks opened up to him, this world of prestige and privilege, luxury and ceremony. Actually Josephine, owing to the disreputable atmosphere of her husband's family, had taken practically no part in the life of Versailles, but among her friends were many who had. Napoleon's bourgeois mind may have gaped as he listened, but he took it all in with that avidity with which he acquired any fresh knowledge, absorbed it, and laid it by for future use. We who can look forward, and see his life *in toto*, can realize how fatal the final alchemy of all this information on past royal living was to be to his mind. Still raw from the sense of social inferiority the swaggering cadets at l'École Militaire had imposed on him, now, for him to be in this way secretly let in by a side door to the royal doings and the royal habits, the valuations and ideas of the past Court, was to his bruised mind a revenge of imagination. Napoleon the snob, of whom history has taken curiously little note but who was yet to be the final undoer of Napoleon the conqueror, stirred at these moments in the womb of his emotions. And here was yet another, and most potent, aspect of the drawing power over him of the widow of the Vicomte de Beauharnais. To marry her was for Napoleon to take a decisive step nearer this gilded world to which he could by himself lay no claim.

He did not even attempt to get the consent of Laetitia and Joseph — who now, in Corsican parlance, constituted "*les chefs de famille*" — to his marriage with Josephine. He knew that, all things considered, any hope of their agreeing would have been futile.

To Josephine's own group of friends, her engagement to the young General was announced in February 1796.

2

In the collection of Napoleon's letters to Josephine there is one, the first of any real importance, as to which opinion differs considerably regarding the date on which it was written. Dr. Léon Cerf in *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine* gives the date as December 1795. Dr. H. F. Hall in his *Napoleon's Letters to Josephine* believes the letter to have been written early in March 1796, that is to say,

a few days before they were married. However, it seems there is a strong possibility that the particular evening to which the letter refers was an evening of reconciliation after what, in a later letter, Napoleon refers to as "the afflicting scene which took place two weeks before our marriage", the two sentences in his letter that follow after this one being, "Virtue to me was everything that you did. Honour was that which pleased you." The question is — Was the quarrel over Barras?

In his own memoirs, in a passage written in the worst possible taste, Barras asserts that Josephine had relations with himself after she was engaged to Napoleon. Certain of her biographers accept this, but it is difficult to take at its face value what Barras obviously wrote to flatter his own sexual vanity. The passage certainly reads like the most patent fabrication. If this is not true, what is very likely to be true is that Napoleon noticed some over-familiarity between Barras and Josephine, and in consequence lost his temper, and that Josephine, fearing to lose him altogether, let him pass into a far greater degree of intimacy with her than before. If so, then the implications of Napoleon's phrases on virtue and honour become clear. As for her relationship with Barras, the inference is that either she deluded Napoleon into believing, or else he deluded himself into believing, that it had not existed. Whatever the date of the letter, whatever degree of intimacy it implies, that night marked not only a crisis in Napoleon's emotional life, but a crisis that in its far-reaching issues was to stamp his character indelibly.

"I awake filled with the thought of you. Your portrait and yesterday's intoxicating evening have given no rest to my senses. Sweet and incomparable Josephine, what a strange effect you have on my heart! Are you annoyed? Do I see you sad? Are you uneasy? . . . my spirit is broken with grief, and there is no more peace for *votre ami* — but is there any more when, giving myself up to the profound feeling that masters me, I draw from your lips, from your heart, a flame that consumes me? Ah! it is this night that has shewn me that your portrait is not yourself!

"You are leaving at midday; in three hours I shall see you. Meanwhile, *mio dolce amor*, a thousand kisses — but do not give me any yourself, for they set my blood alight."

Those moments when, lying on a bank within the moonlight, he had felt the confines of his consciousness expand had been an adumbration of this which was an experience not only physical but spiritual. His whole being was quickened : the poet and the mystic that lay in embryo within him stirred. He believed himself in relation with a being who, as he wrote later, " effaced the shame of human nature ". In his novel *Clisson et Eugénie*, written only a few months before, he had said of his autobiographical hero : " His ardent imagination, his heart of fire, his relentless reasoning, his frigid spirit could be nothing but bored with the cajolery of coquettes, and displays of gallantry . . . the play of words meant nothing to him ". And now, in his relations with Josephine, he was profoundly moved, deeply serious.

As for Josephine, she had married him for security. As was her first matrimonial venture, this was a *mariage de convenance*. She not only did not love Napoleon, she scarcely even cared for him ; but from the instinct of self-preservation, with all the subtleties of her own distracting person, and all the amative knowledge acquired in her Paris life, she had ushered this son of nature into a world of exquisite delusion.

3

On March the 9th Napoleon and Josephine were married at ten o'clock at night before the Mayor of the Section. Then they drove back to the Rue Chantereine behind Josephine's pair of black horses. Napoleon, coming into her room, found Fortuné ensconced on her bed, and wished to turn him off, but, as if to show the little value she set on her new husband, Josephine insisted that her poodle should remain. It was on this occasion that Fortuné bit him in the leg.

Barras says of Napoleon about this time that " he was always asking me for something " and that he had been pressing him for the command of the Army of Italy. Finally, Barras had urged him to go to Carnot and the other Directors. " Without asking anything of Carnot," Barras told Napoleon, " you can talk to him of Italian affairs with all the knowledge you have of them. . . . I will see to the rest." Carnot was impressed by Napoleon's

projected plan of campaign, and, finally, he was given the command. Meanwhile, Josephine had written to a friend : " Barras assures me that if I marry the General he will obtain for him the Command-in-Chief of the Army of Italy " : but how much, if any, effect his marriage with her had on the situation it is impossible, in dealing with such a closely interrelated knot of people, to say. Two days after his marriage Napoleon drove off south to take up this command. On his Italian campaign, outwardly he was to go from victory to victory : inwardly, in his relations with Josephine, from defeat to defeat.

It is interesting, in view of his later insistence on always keeping the public eye on himself, to hear him, before he departed on this his first campaign, saying to a journalist, " In the accounts of our victories be careful not to speak of anyone but *me*, always *me*, you understand ? " Such was his first attempt at that self-propaganda of which later he was to become past-master.

Three days after Napoleon had parted from Josephine he wrote to her : " Every moment takes me further from you, my adored one, and every instant I feel less strength to exist far from you. You are the perpetual object of my thoughts, I exhaust my imagination in guessing what you are doing. If I see you unhappy my heart is torn, and my grief increased. If you are gay and lively with your women friends I reproach you with having so quickly forgotten our sorrowful separation of three days ago. . . . As you see, I am not easy to satisfy, but it is quite another thing, my dear one, if I fear your health may be affected or that you have reasons for being sad which I cannot guess. Then I regret the haste with which I am being taken from your heart. If I were asked, Have I slept well ? I feel that, before answering, I should need a courier to have arrived who would have assured me that you had slept well. The illnesses, the passions of men only affect me in the thought that they might affect you, my dear one. May my genie who has always preserved me in the midst of the greatest dangers surround you, protect you, and leave me unprotected. Ah ! do not be gay, but a trifle melancholy, and above all may your soul be as free from sorrow as your lovely body from illness : you know what our good Ossian says about that.

" Write to me, my gentlest dear, and at length, and accept the

thousand and one kisses of the most tender and the most true love. — BONAPARTE."

Even before a fortnight had gone by, as he read the letters that came in answer to his, he began to feel a miserable apprehension. Her notes that his galloping orderlies brought him were so short, so lacking in any warmth of feeling, they so little matched the devotion she had professed for him in that little *pavillon* in the Rue Chantierine. "Nature has given me a strong and decisive temperament, she has made you of lace and gauze," Napoleon wrote at the end of March, summing up their two individualities in a phrase. Actually, his own heavily-charged nature asked of a woman just such appeasement as Josephine's gossamer attractiveness provided, but at the same time he wished for hard-wearing qualities beneath. Josephine was all pliability. Nonchalantly there flowed forth from her to everyone good-humour, tact, sweetness, kindness without discrimination. But this pliability worked equally in a reverse sense; and with the same nonchalance she would let the weeks slip by without going to see Eugène at his school, accumulate debts, forget anything that was unpleasant to think of. She was like a fish: impossible to get a firm grip of anywhere.

It is in Napoleon's letter in which he tells Josephine she is made of gauze and lace that we first read of his arrangement that she should come and join him in Italy. "I have not passed a day without loving you; I have not passed a night without pressing you in my arms, I have not taken a cup of tea without cursing glory and ambition that keep me far from the soul of my life. In the midst of work, at the head of my troops, while inspecting the camps, only my adorable Josephine is in my heart, fills my spirit, absorbs my thoughts. . . . If, in the middle of the night, I get up to work, it is that my sweet dear may arrive the sooner by several days, and yet, in your letter of the 23rd, of the 26th *Ventôse*, you treat me to *vous*. . . . Ah! wicked one, how could you have written this letter! It is so cold! . . . My spirit is sad, my heart enslaved, and my imagination terrifies me. . . . The day when you say *I love you less* will be the last of my love or the last of my life. . . . Have you ceased to care for me? Forgive me, soul of my life. . . . My heart, entirely taken up with you, is

beset by fears that make me wretched."

In a postscript he adds : " My soldiers have a confidence in me that cannot be expressed ; you alone sadden me ; you alone, the pleasure and the torment of my life."

The next letter from him was written on April the 3rd from Port Maurice : " You have taken from me more than my soul : you are the one thought of my life. If I am worried with the pressure of business, if I am apprehensive of the result, if I am disgusted with mankind, if I am ready to curse life, I put my hand on my heart : there your portrait pulsates, I look at it, and love makes me completely happy. . . . By what art have you known how to captivate all my faculties, to concentrate the life of my mind on yourself ? . . . To live for Josephine, there is the history of my life. . . . Before, I used often to say, mankind can do nothing to him who dies without regret ; but today, to die without being loved by you, to die without this certitude, that is the torment of hell, it is the living and striking picture of absolute annihilation. . . . I come to a stop, my sweet dear, my soul is sad, my body tired out, my spirit heavy. Men weary me : I certainly ought to detest them : they keep me far from my heart. . . . *Adieu, adieu*, I lie down without you, I shall go to sleep without you. I beg of you, let me sleep. The last few nights I have felt you in my arms — happy dream, but, but, it was not you."

Josephine, in answering this, breaks off her own letter as, so she says, she is going down into the country.

" I am not satisfied ", writes Napoleon on April the 9th. " Your last letter was as cold as friendship. I did not find in it that warmth that lights up your glances. . . . The fear of not being loved by Josephine, the thought of seeing you inconstant, of . . . But I am forging griefs. There are so many real ones ! why should one invent more still ? You cannot have inspired me with limitless love without sharing it ; and you, with your soul, your feeling, and your understanding, cannot, in return for surrender, for devotion, deal the blow of death itself."

It is a curious experience to read side by side with these letters the account of Napoleon's conduct of that Italian campaign which was their background : to have the picture in one's mind of that arrogant, incisive-voiced young general, and yet at the same time

to see within him the bowed and weeping figure of the writer of these letters.

In later life Napoleon said of himself that it is when a man is alone that his real feelings break forth. Beneath an outward air of calmness he had, and was to have all his life, a violently emotional nature, an emotionalism that at times bordered on hysteria : but, among his multiple talents, he possessed that of being able to keep his cerebral and his emotive forces almost entirely separate. This capacity was never more necessary than at present, but, from now onwards, one notices a gradual change being wrought on his spirit that was to have the most disastrous effect on his character. Here in Italy his opportunity had at last come to fill a part beyond his most extravagant hopes, and yet the sense of triumph was all the time being drained off by this misery of mind beneath. If the impulsions that had led him to marry Josephine had been of mixed quality, the final result had been to awake in him the most tender, selfless emotion, the most unsullied love of which he was capable. And now, in her lack of response, all the finer issues of his spirit gradually became warped. We should be placing an unfair responsibility on Josephine if we blamed her exclusively for the deterioration and hardening of his character that from now onwards become apparent ; but we have seen his ugly reaction to any sense of humiliation, and here not only were his gentlest susceptibilities lacerated, his sexual self-esteem bruised, but beneath was the unbearable ache of disappointment at finding, where he had hoped for devotion, merely indifference. This lack of emotional response laid him more open to the call of other desires ; the force of feeling Josephine had called up in him — so far larger in its scope than mere desire of physical possession — had to find outlet in some direction, and it is possible this rebuffed violence of feeling went to feed the ambition that already lay dormant within him. He tells us himself that it was in the beginning of May this year, after the battle of Lodi, that he clearly heard the accents of that voice which for the rest of his life was to rule his every action. In the evening as he rode about among his troops after the battle, his soldiers, fired with affection for this man whose interest in them was paternal, whose courage was so evident, and whose ascendancy was so

dazzling, started, in friendliest fashion, to shout out as he rode by, "*le petit caporal*". Pelted with affection, he sat his horse as it picked its way among all the debris of a battlefield. These lusty cries, this living force of enthusiasm that his own efforts had brought into being, stirred him. There came to him an exquisite awareness of his own powers. And at that moment, ambition that was to know no limit, ambition winged and taloned like an eagle, stirred within his mind.

At St. Helena, in speaking of this moment, he said, "It was not till after Lodi that the idea came to me that I could after all definitely become a decisive actor in our political scene. It was then there came to birth the first spark of lofty ambition."

4

By now Europe had become a sounding-box to Napoleon's fame. Men's minds were stunned by his successes in this Italian campaign, successes that followed each other like the blows of a hammer. He had become a human portent on whom every eye was fixed.

Meanwhile at her school, Hortense, the stepdaughter of France's hero, was being constantly urged by Madame Campan to write to him. Naturally, as everywhere else in France, this girls' school had for weeks been in an exalted condition over the Italian news. Each day, as the accounts appeared in the papers, Madame Campan would read them out to her pupils. She would try to persuade Hortense to stay and listen to these readings; but on every occasion Hortense had walked out of the room. "Do you realize," Madame Campan asked, "that your mother has linked her fate with that of an extraordinary man? What ability! what bravery! Every moment new conquests!"

"Madame," retorted the child, "he may keep all his conquests, but I will never forgive him the conquest of my mother." Madame Campan, delighted at the neatness of her pupil's wit, repeated her *mot*. Soon all Paris was laughing over it. No doubt in time it reached Napoleon, and added to his irritation against this child who, so close to the woman he adored, kept up this steady hostility against him.

Madame Campan continued to press her pupil to do what she considered the correct thing by writing to her stepfather: and suddenly Hortense agreed. For an idea had come to her. She would indeed write to Napoleon, she would tell him how astonished she was that, after all the unpleasant things he had said about women, he had yet brought himself to marry. Napoleon, in the midst of a thousand duties, problems, urgencies, received this uncompromising epistle. Nothing could have been more inappropriate, and yet, and herein lay the sting, at the same time nothing could have been more ironically appropriate. In return he wrote his stepdaughter a charming little letter, with the phrase "one makes exceptions" blowing her argument to pieces, and at the end he mentioned "a little box of perfumes" he had sent her. But this present was a mere gesture to placate an enemy. A mention of her in one of his letters to Josephine ("I have had a letter from Hortense. She is wholly amiable") was a mere blind. Opposition, even from a child, exasperated him, and in after years he was to make Hortense pay in full for hers.

Now, when a letter from this man of whom Paris was talking from morning to night was actually delivered at Hortense's school, the excitement can be imagined. The folded sheet was opened. It was undoubtedly from Napoleon: there was his signature, "Bonaparte", at the end of it. So much, but nothing else, was clear. What was the letter about? Impossible to say, because impossible to decipher. It was as if an inky insect had rushed convulsively from side to side of the page. One after another had a try to see if they could make out a few words, and in the end everyone gave it up. It remained, in the eyes of the other school-girls, Hortense Beauharnais' indubitably grand, but useless, possession.

Several years later, when Napoleon was First Consul, Hortense one day took this carefully-kept letter to Bourrienne, then Napoleon's secretary, and got him to unravel the sentences.

Napoleon's supreme desire now was that Josephine should join him in Italy. Junot, who was with him, was going to Paris

with captured colours, and Napoleon wished him to bring her out on his return journey.

"I have had your letters of the 16th and the 21st. You have been many days without writing. Then what are you doing? Yes, my dear one, I am not jealous, but sometimes uneasy. Come quickly; I warn you, if you delay, you will find me ill. Fatigue and your absence — they are too much at the same time.

"Your letters make the happiness of my days, and my happy days are not frequent. Junot is taking twenty-two flags to Paris. You must come back with him, do you understand? . . . misery without remedy, sadness without consolation, grief without end, if I had the misfortune of seeing him return alone. . . . But you will come, won't you? You will be here by my side, on my heart, in my arms, on my mouth. Take wings. Come, come. But travel by easy stages. The road is long, bad, fatiguing. If you should overturn, or come to harm; if the exhaustion . . . Come by easy stages, my adored one, but often be in touch with me in your thoughts. . . .

"Read the song of *Carthon* through carefully, and sleep far from your *bon ami*, thinking of him. . . ."

Carthon was the first work of that Gothic sensationalist, the *soi-disant* Ossian, to be published in a French translation. "A mist rose, slowly, from the lake. It came, in the figure of an aged man, along the silent plain. Its large limbs did not move in steps; for a ghost supported it in mid air. It came towards Selma's hall and dissolved in a shower of blood." Whether this kind of thing made the same appeal to Josephine as it did to Napoleon is doubtful.

Actually, what was filling her mind at the moment, and filling it with consternation, was Napoleon's wish that she should join him in Italy. His letters had not penetrated her very far. They probably meant no more to her than any other pink-sugar love letter such as she had no doubt received in numbers from Barras. But this journey! What a prospect! Jolting along endlessly in a travelling carriage over roads which even Napoleon himself said were so bad that there was a possibility her carriage might overturn. And at the end of it only to find this ardent young soldier who did not particularly interest her. On

the other hand, it was borne in on her that France was becoming hysterical over her husband. Her little house in the Rue Chante-reine, formerly of no more interest to the people of Paris than hundreds of others, had become a centre of pilgrimage : as courier after courier came in announcing Napoleon's latest successes the crowds gathered round cheering . . . yelling . . . If Josephine looked out of the window she was met with screams of "*Notre Dame des Victoires !*"

Meanwhile, in his next letter, written at the end of April, Napoleon continued his instructions for her journey : " Murat, who will give you this letter, will explain to you, my adored one, what I am doing, what I am going to do, what I wish. I have made an armistice with the King of Sardinia. Three days ago I sent off Junot with my brother, but they will arrive after Murat who goes by way of Turin.

" I wrote to you by Junot that you should set off with him to join me : today I beg you to come with Murat, to come by Turin . . . your lodgings are ready at Mondovi and at Tortone, from Mondovi you can go on to Nice and to Genoa, and from there to the rest of Italy, if you care to. My happiness consists in your being happy ; my joy in your being gay ; my pleasure in your being pleased. Never was a woman loved with more devotion, warmth, and tenderness. Never would it be possible more entirely to dominate another's heart, to dictate to it all tastes, inclinations, to form for it all its desires. If it is otherwise with you I deplore my blindness . . . and if I did not die from grief at it, bruised for life, my heart would never open again to a sentiment of pleasure or sweetness ; my life would be entirely physical. . . .

" Ah ! then I should not regret dying. . . . How can you imagine, my life, I should be anything but sad ! No letters from you, I only get one every four days, whereas, if you loved me, you would write to me twice a day. . . . Adieu, Josephine, for me you are a monster that I cannot explain. . . . Every day I love you the more. Absence cures little passions, it increases great ones. A kiss on your mouth or on your heart. . . .

" Bring your lady's-maid with you, your cook, your coachman ; I have got some coach-horses here for your use and a

beautiful carriage. Bring only what is personally necessary. I have silver and a porcelain service here which you can use. Adieu, work calls me. . . . Ah ! if this evening I don't get any letters from you I shall be in despair. . . .

"I am sending you two hundred *louis* by Murat which you can use if you need them, or spend in furnishing the room you've chosen for me. . . . What a happy day it will be . . . the day when you cross the Alps ! That will be the most perfect reward for my labour, and the victories I have gained."

But he was playing the bass of a duet of which Josephine was incapable of playing the treble. When Murat arrived in Paris she got him to write to Napoleon and to tell him she was going to have a baby. Whether she really believed this was so it is impossible to say : she was certainly ill, and a coming baby seemed a natural explanation. But, whether real or invented, it was an excuse for not setting off for Italy.

We have another letter of Napoleon written about two weeks after the last. The probability is that Josephine only kept certain of his letters, and threw away or lost the others.

"Then it is true that you are *enceinte*. Murat has written to tell me, but he says that it has made you ill, and that he does not think it prudent you should undertake such a long journey. Then I shall still be deprived of the happiness of clasping you in my arms ! Then for several months I shall still be far from all I love ! Is it possible I am not to have the happiness of seeing you with *ton petit ventre* ? . . . Your letter is short, sad, and the writing trembles. What can be worrying you ? Ah ! do not stay in the country ; be in town, try to amuse yourself ; and believe there are no more genuine torments for my spirit than to think that you are suffering and sad. I used to think I was jealous, but I swear to you it is nothing. Rather than know you melancholy I believe I would give you a lover myself. . . .

"Things are going well here, but my heart is full of an anxiety that cannot be put into words. You are ill, far from me. Be cheerful, and take great care of yourself, you whom, in my heart, I value more than the universe ! Alas ! the idea of your being ill makes me wretched."

A few days passed, and a hope sprang up in his mind that

Josephine had actually started, that, after all, she was coming. "I don't know", he wrote from Milan, "why, since this morning, I feel happier : I have a presentiment that you have started on your journey here, the idea overwhelms me with joy."

But, far from his receiving news that Josephine had started, a courier from Paris actually arrived at Milan without so much as a letter from her. "Josephine," wrote Napoleon miserably, "no letter from you since the 28th. A courier has arrived who left Paris on the 27th, and I have had no reply, no news of my dear one. Has she forgotten me, or does she ignore the fact that there is no greater torment for me than not to receive a letter from *mio dolce amor* ?"

Now his only consolation lay in trying to convince himself that Josephine was not in Paris, and therefore had not got his letters : hence her silence. "Josephine," he writes again, "where will this letter be delivered to you ? If in Paris my unhappiness is certain — you do not care for me any more ! There is nothing left me but to die. . . . All the serpents of the Furies are in my breast, and already I am only half existing. . . . *Oh ! toi !* . . . my tears flow. No more rest or hope. I respect the will and immutable law of fate. I am overwhelmed with glory so as to make me feel my misfortune with all the more bitterness. I shall accustom myself to everything in this new state of affairs, but I cannot accustom myself to not esteeming you any more, no, that is not possible ! My Josephine has set out to come here, she cares for me at least a little, so much promised love cannot have vanished in two months. . . .

"Tonight I have re-read all your letters, including the one written with your blood. What feelings they awoke in me !"

And again, in another letter of the same day : "Josephine, you ought to have started from Paris on the 5th ; you ought to have started on the 11th, on the 12th you had not set out. . . . My soul had opened itself to joy ; it is filled with grief. All the couriers arrive without bringing me any letters from you. . . . When you do write, the few words, the style, are never that of profound feeling. Your love for me was a light caprice ; you already feel how ridiculous it would be for it to engage your heart. . . . You have never loved me. . . . I calculated you would be at Milan

on the 13th, and you are still in Paris. I withdraw into my own spirit, I stifle a feeling that is unworthy of me, and if glory is not sufficient for my happiness it furnishes the element of death and immortality. As for yourself may the memory of me not be odious to you. My misfortune is to have understood you so little ; yours, to have imagined I was like the men who surround you. My heart never feels anything tepidly . . . it had refrained from love ; you have imposed on it a passion without limit . . . you are beautiful, gracious ; your sweet and celestial spirit is written on your face. I adored everything in you ; if more naïve, younger, I should have loved you less. . . .

“ You have been my misfortune. . . . I felt it when my spirit became involved, when yours daily gained a limitless empire, and enslaved all my senses. Cruel one !!! Why make me hope for a sentiment you did not feel !!! But to reproach you is not worthy of me. I have never believed in happiness. Every day death hovers around me. . . . Is life worth making such a commotion about !!! Adieu, Josephine, stay in Paris, don't write to me any more. . . . A thousand daggers tear at my heart ; do not drive them in further. Adieu, my happiness, my life, everything that existed for me on this earth.”

Before he wrote again in three days' time he had had news that Josephine had been ill, which explained, or which he took to be the explanation, why she had not written. Filled with compunction he sat down and wrote again.

“ Since the 18th, *ma chère* Josephine, I was hoping for you, and believed you to have arrived at Milan. No sooner had I come from the battlefield of Borghetto than I ran to look for you ; I did not find you ; several days later I learnt from a courier that you had not started, and he brought me no letters from you. My mind was bruised with grief. I believed myself abandoned by everyone who interests me on this earth. I never feel anything feebly. Drowned in suffering, I wrote to you perhaps too strongly. If my letters have distressed you I shall be inconsolable for life. . . . Le Tessin having overflowed, I went to Tortone to wait for you : each day I waited in vain. At last, four hours ago, I went there again. I saw the one letter brought in bringing me the news that you were not coming. I will not try to put into words my pro-

found distress when, the next instant, I learnt you were ill, that you have three doctors, that you are in danger. . . . Since that moment I have been in a condition that nothing can describe. One must have my heart, love as I love you. Ah ! I did not believe it was possible to undergo such suffering, such terrible torment. I thought sorrow had its limitations and boundaries, but in my soul it has no limitation. . . . You are suffering, and I am far from you. Alas ! perhaps you do not exist any longer. . . . The day when I know Josephine is no more, I shall cease to live. No duty, no claim will bind me to earth any longer. Men are so contemptible ! You alone, in my eyes, effaced the shame of human nature. . . . Murat tries to convince me that you are only slightly ill ; but you do not write ; it is a month since I had a letter from you. You are tender-hearted, sensitive, and you love me. You are struggling between illness and doctors . . . far from him who would tear you from illness, even from the arms of death. . . . If your illness continues, obtain permission for me to come and see you for an hour. In five days I should be in Paris, and in twelve back with my army. Without you, without you, I can be no more use here. Let who will love glory, let who will serve his country — my spirit is suffocated with this exile, and when my dear one is suffering, is ill, I cannot coldly calculate victory. I do not know how to express myself, I do not know what to do, I want to take the post-chaise and return to Paris, but, it must be obvious to you, honour holds me back in spite of my heart. For pity's sake make someone write to me so that I can know the nature of your illness and what there is to fear. Our lot is really dreadful. Scarcely married, scarcely united, and already separated ! My tears flow onto your portrait ; that alone does not leave me. My brother has not written to me. Ah ! no doubt he fears to tell me what he knows must lacerate me irreparably. Adieu, my dear one : how hard life is, and how horrible are the ills from which one suffers ! A million kisses ; believe that nothing equals my love, which will last all my life. Think of me, write to me twice a day. . . . Come, come quickly, but take care of your health.

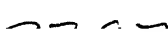
“My life is a perpetual nightmare. A melancholy presentiment prevents my breathing. I'm not alive any longer, I have lost

more than life, more than happiness, more than rest ; I am nearly without hope. I am despatching a courier to you. He will only stay four hours in Paris and then will bring me back your reply. Write me ten pages : that alone can a little console me. You are ill, you love me, I have grieved you, you are with child, and I do not see you. The thought of it confounds me. I have done you so many wrongs. I do not know how to expiate them. I blamed you for remaining in Paris : you are there, ill. Forgive me, my dear one : the love you inspire me with has made me take leave of my senses. . . . I have such dismal presentiments that I would limit myself to seeing you, to clasp you for two hours against my breast, and to die together. Who is looking after you ? I imagine you have sent for Hortense, I love that amiable child a thousand times more since I have thought she can console you a little. As for myself, no consolation, no rest, no hope, till the courier is back whom I have despatched to you, and when, in a long letter, you have explained what your illness is. . . . If it is dangerous, I warn you, I shall set off for Paris at once. . . . Josephine, how can you remain so long without writing to me ? Your last letter is of the 3rd of the month. . . .

“ I can do nothing without you. I hardly know how I existed without knowing you. . . . All my thoughts are centred on your alcove, on your bed, on your heart. Your illness, that is what I think of, night and day. Without appetite, without sleep, without interest in friends, in glory, in country, you, only you ; and the rest of the world exists no more for me than if it was annihilated. . . . Sometimes I tell myself I am alarmed without reason. Already she is cured, she starts, she has started, perhaps she is already at Lyons. . . . Vain imagination ! You are on your bed, suffering, you are pale, and your eyes are languishing ; but when you are cured, if one of us must be ill, ought it not to be me ? Hardier and more courageous, I would have borne illness more easily. Destiny is cruel ; she strikes at me through you.

“ What consoles me sometimes is to think that no one can compel me to survive you. . . . Do you remember the dream when I took off your slippers, your dress, and made you enter in your entirety into my heart ? . . . ”

There is a final letter written on 26th June which starts with



the bitter cry : " For a month I have had nothing from my dear one but two notes of three lines each. . . . A day perhaps will come when I shall see you, for I do not doubt but that you are still in Paris. *Eh bien !* on that day I shall show you my pockets full of letters that I have not sent because they were too stupid. . . . *Bon Dieu !* Tell me, you who know so well how to let others love you without loving them, do you know how one gets cured of loving ? "

A travelling carriage in which sat Josephine was bearing her southwards through France on her way to Italy and Napoleon. There must have been other carriages following hers, as she was bringing with her her *femme de chambre* and three servants. Joseph and Junot too were of the party : also a young lieutenant whom Junot had brought with him, an extremely dapper young man with black hair and a dark skin. He was so much in the mode of the moment that he even had a Greek name : Hippolyte. His surname, however, was merely Charles. Like Josephine, Hippolyte existed on the surface of life ; his mind and hers mirrored back all that was presented to them in the same fashion. He was, says Laure Permon, who knew him, "*un drôle de garçon*". In his talk he hopped from pun to pun. Josephine found him most entertaining ; he helped pass many of those hot travelling hours agreeably.

On trundled Josephine's great carriage one day after another, along the dusty roads of summer. At the hours when the sun shone most relentlessly, in that down-pouring swelter all the carriage-work contracted and grew hot to the touch : the burning leather strained and creaked : on the horses' skins the sweat ran in dark rivulets. At last, on July the 29th, the travelling party reached Milan, and Josephine clambered down her carriage steps at the door of the palace Napoleon had chosen for her.

6

It is the early summer of 1797, at the castle of Montebello, where Napoleon had moved his Court from Milan.

Since Josephine had arrived at Milan the year before, she and

Napoleon had been, now together, now parted, as he pursued his Austrian campaign. When he had broken the second Austrian army the bells of Milan clashed for five days without a stop. Josephine was becoming used to this frenzy over her husband : the shoutings, the crowds, the bells ringing and ringing against the blue Italian sky. But it did not make her find him any more interesting. When he was away with the army she was as careless as ever about writing ; a few words, or none at all, and if there were a few words, they were, Napoleon complained, only " half a dozen lines thrown off anyhow ".

Relentlessly, miserably, it was being forced into his mind that it was not in her to give, that she was in fact quite incapable of giving, the supporting love he had hoped to find. " When I exact from you a love like my own," he wrote at last, " I am wrong : why expect lace to weigh as heavy as gold ? . . . *I am wrong*, since nature has not given me attractions with which to captivate you."

In the discovery of the slight stuff of which she was made, in his anguish at her lack of response, the finer part of him wilted, and was finally all but to die. In his relation to Josephine his descent from the high terraces of love to those less high was one of slow gradations, but it is one which is only too clearly visible. We see his sensibilities deteriorating and hardening till he becomes the complete egoist, the all but complete materialist of his middle life.

In Italy, when at times he had been able to leave the army for a few days to see her, she would not even trouble to come and meet him. In the November of the year before he had written : " I arrived at Milan, I rushed to your room, I had left everything to see you, to clasp you in my arms . . . you were not there : you are running about to entertainments in the towns ; when I am coming you keep away : you do not care any more about your dear Napoleon. A whim made you love him : your instability makes you indifferent to him.

" Accustomed to dangers, I know the remedy for the vexations and evils of life. The grief I suffer is incalculable. . . .

" I shall be here during the day up till the 9th. Do not put yourself to inconvenience : run after pleasures ; happiness is

made for you. The whole world is too fortunate if it can please you, and only your husband is very, very wretched."

And, again, the next day : "The courier has arrived whom Berthier despatched to Genoa. You have not had time to write to me, I understand it only too easily. Surrounded with pleasures . . . you would have been wrong to make the least sacrifice for me. . . .

"As for me, to love you alone, to make you happy, to do nothing that can vex you — that is the destiny and the aim of my life.

"Be happy, do not reproach me for anything, do not interest yourself in the felicity of a man who does not live except in your life, who enjoys nothing but your pleasures and your happiness. . . . Adieu, adorable woman, adieu, my Josephine. May fate concentrate in my heart all griefs and sorrows, but may it give my Josephine prosperous and happy days. Who deserves it more than she does? When it is proved that she is not capable of loving any more I shall shut away my profound grief, and content myself with being useful to her. . . .

"I open the letter again to give you a kiss. . . . Ah ! Josephine . . . Josephine ! . . ."

As for Josephine, to whom at this time of her life all feeling, except that for her children, was light and transient, the anguish that arose from the dark places of his spirit was outside her comprehension. Her chosen companion was Hippolyte : his Hussar uniform, prodigal with gold lace, set him off charmingly, and, whenever Napoleon was away, he came to breakfast at the Serbellini Palace. But all the same Josephine was bored with Italy, and wrote to her Aunt Renaudin (now married to the Marquis de Beauharnais) and told her so. At the same time she remarked what a devoted husband Napoleon was : he adored her, he gave her everything she wanted ; he was sending a jewelled watch to Hortense, and a gold one to Eugène. In return, she had persuaded him to have his portrait painted by Gros.

We are grateful for this persuasion, for in this portrait we have Napoleon in a transition period : the intermediate stage between the young, strenuous adventurer and the mature Napoleon of popular imagination. Gros' picture of him at the Bridge of

Arcola shows him in all the romantic illusion of war as projected from the civilian mind. Gros himself admits that it was only a snatched-at likeness, Napoleon not giving him, so Gros complained, the time even to mix his colours : but all the same the face gives a suggestion of that sensitive charm that must have been so potent, and which no later artists, all of them obsessed with the Imperial Eagle theme, managed to convey.

Now, at the Castle Montebello this summer, Napoleon had collected round him nearly all his family. Laetitia was there : Joseph — still, in spite of all Napoleon's military prominence, acting as, and accepted by Napoleon as, *Chef de la famille Bonaparte*, — and Louis, who on the Italian campaign had been one of Napoleon's aides-de-camp. This living constantly at the elbow of his brilliant and explosive-tempered brother, whose opinions admitted of no argument, and whose orders demanded abject obedience, was having an unfortunate effect on Louis. Naturally suspicious and pernickety, a hidden sense of resentment and defiance was growing in him against the family idol. To this gathering at Montebello had come, too, Joseph Fesch, Laetitia's half-brother, and Napoleon's three sisters : Marianne, now married to a Corsican of the name of Baciocchi, and Pauline and Caroline.

It was in this palace, standing in the midst of its spreading garden, and overlooking the Lombard plain which lay simmering beneath the southern sun, that Napoleon held his Court as Italy's deliverer. Posted on guard around the castle were three hundred Polish soldiers ; and within the great rooms, along the wide corridors, there seemed already to float an all but royal atmosphere. Semi-royal etiquette was, in fact, imposed ; and in the vast tent that he had had put up facing the house, Napoleon, surrounded by his bodyguard, would receive requests for an audience from the important people of Italy : ministers, officials, scientists, envoys, agents, writers, and artists. This was the apotheosis of his twenty-seven years of effort. He had the acclamation of all France ; the stare of the world : he had Josephine and his family with him, and was in a position to help them with limitless generosity.

At meals he and Josephine sat with his family and such of his

generals as he had invited. Round the table was displayed this collection of Bonaparte faces, all indelibly stamped with the Laetitia mould. Marianne had taken the impression least satisfactorily; it was as if in her case the mould had slipped. She was a young woman as graceless in mind as she was in body, and few people cared for her. Pauline, the next sister, was now a girl of sixteen, and lovely as if she had stepped from a cloud. Caroline, the youngest of the three, had her looks too, but behind that glowing young face were coming to birth some of the unpleasantest characteristics imaginable. Among this family group moved Napoleon, outwardly one of them; inwardly, functioning in his own world of genius, a world at an entirely different tempo from theirs. Among them, too, glided Josephine in her Paris clothes, weaving that dulcet, harmonious atmosphere that was her great social asset; full of little attentions to Laetitia, attentions that Napoleon, not yet sophisticated enough to be irritated by his bourgeois mother, noted approvingly. But already Josephine was arousing in his family much the same feelings as the Paris Incroyables had aroused in Napoleon himself two years back. Marianne was the only one of the Bonaparte sisters who had so much as seen Paris: so far, Marseilles had been their social apex. An awareness of what provincial figures they cut at Josephine's side must have pressed on them. Pauline and Caroline, lovely young feminine roughs, soft-breathing creatures with the freshness of very early days upon them, instinctively set themselves against this Paris exotic — those languid airs of hers, that carefully made-up face, that trotting poodle at her side. . . . Pauline's first reaction, the moment Josephine's back was turned, was to shoot out her tongue. Laetitia did not put out her tongue, but disapproval lay coiled within her. This Vicomte's widow with not a sign of coming child-bearing upon her was, in the eyes of this paramount mother, not a desirable wife for her dear Napoleone, who was getting on so nicely and doing so well for them all. And how tired-out he was getting in doing it! "You will kill yourself!" she had shot out at him the moment she arrived.

It was beyond her and her daughters' brisk minds to realize what relief Napoleon's dynamic nature found in the nebulousity of Josephine's. But it was not beyond Laetitia's mind to realize

her daughter-in-law's extravagance. Bringing up her family on nothing had taught Laetitia bone-bare economy ; she saw now clearly enough in what direction a great deal of her son's money would have to go : and then, besides, there were those two Beauharnais children to be provided for. If the Bonapartes were outwardly agreeable, a vendetta had already taken root. On the whole not a nice family.

But quite apart from the Bonapartes, Josephine had her own interests and concerns. With a return to Paris in sight she had been sending off letter after letter regarding the doing-up of the rooms in the Rue Chantreine, now to be called Rue de la Victoire. In the drawing-room she arranged to have a frieze painted by pupils of David, while bas-reliefs by Moitte were to show behind a row of bronzed plaster pillars ; a completely round boudoir was to be built ; there was to be furniture *à la grecque* from original designs by Percier, while a room was to be prepared for Napoleon with the bed draped to represent a tent, and with drums for seats. He could give her handfuls of money now for all her fantasies ; for, apart from what he received legitimately as Commander-in-Chief, he had, during his Italian campaign, unknown to the Directory, been appropriating vast sums for himself and placing them, under fictitious names, with various bankers.

Already those about him noticed how, in his attitude to the generals, statesmen, and officials with whom he had to deal, he had already acquired " the aplomb of a man who knew his own worth and place ". He knew, in fact, how to impose himself on everyone. On everyone, that is to say, but one, and that was the laughing Pauline. To see this formerly impecunious brother who was always getting into political scrapes in Corsica, now walking about lording it over everyone, made no impression on her except in a risible aspect. One derives a good deal of amusement from watching Napoleon's attempts to crush this Ariel. At meals her inopportune observations, her misplaced giggles, would draw upon her that savage frown before which the most thick-skinned soldier in the French Army would grow embarrassed. But not so Pauline. His anger would pass through her as harmlessly as if she were made of air. Junot had originally wished to marry this delectable child, but had been refused by Napoleon ; and now,

while at Montebello, she married another of his Generals, Leclerc, the son of a rich mill-owner.

In the evenings, during this family party in Italy, Napoleon would throw aside the great man, and the late flowering of a boyhood that had been so cruelly frost-bitten would appear. He would propose that each person should tell a story; in reality so as to give himself the chance of embarking on his own repertoire of ghostly happenings and macabre incidents: and then, the room made nearly dark, a dagger in his hand, he would uproariously give himself up to all the delights of playing the fool.

7

After the signing of the Treaty of Campo Formio in October 1797, Napoleon and Josephine went back to Paris at the beginning of December. "There are no words in any language capable of giving a true picture of the effect produced in France by Bonaparte's arrival", writes Laure Permon. Nearly all the members of his family had come too, basking in the effulgence that rayed forth from Napoleon. The Paris streets, the Paris shops were to become very familiar with the sight of all those Bonaparte profiles.

In February the following year Napoleon, who had been made Commander of the Army of England, inspected the coastal towns with a view to the embarkation of an expeditionary force. He came to the conclusion that, for the moment, an invasion of our country was impossible. In its place, he put forward a project for the occupation of Egypt ("I don't want to stay here . . ." he confided to a friend. "Already my glory has gone. This little Europe doesn't supply enough of it. One must go to the East. All *les grandes gloires* emanate from there."). His plans were accepted by the Directory, and in May, as General of the expeditionary force, he set off for his fabulous Egyptian campaign; intended as a prelude to the invasion of India. This time he took Eugène with him as one of his aides-de-camp. Josephine went with them as far as Toulon to see her husband and son embark. She said good-bye to Napoleon on the jetty, where, silhouetted behind him against the sky, rose the filigree of crowding masts

and rigging of the men-of-war for transporting the French Army across the Mediterranean.

When the moment came for Napoleon to part from Josephine he put his arms round her, then started to go down the steps, but returned. "God knows how long it will be," he said. Josephine was crying. Then she went to a balcony near by, keeping her gaze fixed on him as his ship imperceptibly slid out to sea.

Napoleon wished, when he should come back, to have a house in the country, and this, coupled possibly with a desire on Josephine's part to remove herself further from the Bonaparte family and their watchful, hostile eyes, made her now look about for one. She decided finally to take a château within a few hours' drive of Paris ; it bore the ill-omened name *la Malmaison*, and had formerly been a leper-house : but neither these unpleasant associations nor the dilapidated condition of the house itself deterred her, so delighted was she, a flower-lover, with the garden. While she had been in Italy she had been given presents of mosaics, cameos, pictures, and statues. These statues, laboriously lugged along the roads, were now taken down to *la Malmaison* and set up in house or garden : places were chosen for the various pictures, while the Florentine mosaics were set out in the drawing-room.

The house made ready, Josephine's friends began to come from Paris to see her. We hear of Barras among them. Then one day a particularly showy calash drew up at the door and Hippolyte Charles stepped out. Josephine had given him introductions to various Army contractors, and this was a visit of thanks. He came again : and finally he came to stay. A woman in a cottage near the park at *la Malmaison* would in the evenings, as she looked through her little window, see two figures strolling about under the trees, and in the dim light, not knowing that Eugène was with Napoleon in Egypt, would take these two slow-moving figures of man and woman to be Josephine and her son. Those who wish to extenuate Josephine's behaviour at this time emphasize the fact that there were constant rumours that Napoleon had lost his life in Egypt, and, if this were so, she had to consider who was going to support her and her children.

Here, in this definite scandal at la Malmaison, was what the Bonapartes had been waiting and hoping for. There are contradictory versions as to how and when the news reached Napoleon, but it seems evident that it was his family who arranged that it should reach him. We have no letters of his to Josephine during this period ; but we have one that he wrote to Joseph from Cairo at the end of July 1798. In reading it, it must be borne in mind that he had now taken Malta and Alexandria, and had fought the battle of the Pyramids.

"I may be in France in two months. . . . I am going through much domestic trouble, for the veil is entirely torn. You alone upon earth remain to me, your friendship is very dear ; to make me a misanthrope it only remains for me to lose your friendship and to see you betray me. . . . Arrange so that I shall have somewhere to live in the country when I come back, either near Paris or in Burgundy. I mean to shut myself up there for the winter. I am tired of human beings : I need solitude and isolation. Greatness bores me, my feelings are dried up, *la gloire* has lost its taste. At twenty-nine I have exhausted everything ; there remains nothing for me except to become a complete egoist. . . . I have nothing more to live for. Adieu, my one friend."

On the face of it this letter seems to point to the liaison between Josephine and Hippolyte Charles : if not, then to some other scandal, whether true or not, that Napoleon's relations had scented out. But the important fact is that he was now convinced of her unfaithfulness.

Napoleon had a moral sense, but only his most biassed panegyrists would deny that, when his desires ran counter to it, it became twisted out of all recognition, and without himself being aware of the distortion : in fact, no one animadverted more energetically than he did on the moral turpitude of mankind. But in spite of his own tricky character, whenever he encountered real goodness, especially in women, it aroused his genuine admiration. In spite of Josephine's vagueness, her flirtations, her indifference, he had managed to beguile himself with the belief that her consummate charm was the expression of exceptional fineness beneath. This had been the burden of all his letters to her. In the clangour of his life this belief had been a bower of refuge, had

held for him ineffable sweetness. Now, Josephine, to him the fountain-head of goodness, had deceived him, had broken her vows, had committed a moral ugliness. The hurt to him was far deeper than that of outraged physical possession : in the shock of disillusionment his whole nature received an injury from which it never recovered. The effect was the more fatal in that, having no religion, his belief in Josephine had stood to him in place of it, and in Josephine's infidelity he lost faith in more than her (" You alone ", he had written to her, " effaced the shame of human nature "). He was sufficiently aware of his own disposition to foresee the damage done to it : " there remains nothing for me except to become a complete egoist ". In a liaison that he had in Egypt with the wife of a certain Captain Fourès he certainly acted on the egoistic principle. Abusing his power as Commander-in-Chief, he sent Fourès off to France with despatches for the Directory, and then took his wife.

Napoleon's letter to Joseph had been written under the first sickening impressions of disillusionment over Josephine, but, as the weeks went on, the violence of his mood faded, and in another letter to his brother, which appears to be two or three months later, he says, " I am asking Louis to give my wife some good advice ". The idea that his first letter suggests — that of leaving her — appears, in spite of what had transpired, to have gradually died down.

8

The 9th of October 1799. It was nearly a year and a half since Napoleon had left France, and there had, as we have seen, been constant rumours that he was no longer alive.

On this particular evening Madame Permon was giving one of those little intimate parties in which she and Laure took such pleasure. " On the evening of the 9th of October ", writes Laure Permon, " my mother had a few friends with her. We were all seated at a large round table playing at *loto dauphin*, a game of which my mother was very fond. Suddenly a cabriolet drove up to the door, a young gentleman jumped out of it, and in a minute was at the top of the staircase. It was my brother Albert. ' Guess what news I bring ! ' he said. As we were all in high

spirits, and by his expression he showed he was too, all sorts of absurd guesses were made, at which Albert repeatedly shook his head. 'Nonsense!' said my mother, taking up the bag containing the little balls, 'If there were a change in the Government of the Republic you could not make it a matter of greater importance.' 'Well, mother,' replied Albert seriously, 'what you say now as a joke may possibly be realized. Bonaparte is in France!'

"When my brother uttered these last words the whole party seemed struck motionless, as if by a magic wand. My mother, who had just drawn a ball out of the bag, held her little hand raised in the air, and, the bag having fallen down, the balls were rolling about the carpet in every direction without anyone noticing. Everyone sat as if petrified."

That evening Josephine was dining with the Gohiers. A letter arrived for her. She opened it, and found it was from Eugène, telling her that he had just landed with Napoleon at Fréjus. It was probably more the fear in her mind that the Bonaparte family would use their influence to persuade her husband to divorce her than any warmth of feeling for him that made her decide to set off instantly to meet him on his journey through France. Let her once be with him, and she would be safe.

"I must go and meet him," she said to the Gohiers.

She would, she decided, take Hortense with her. She drove off to Madame Campan's school and told Hortense the overwhelming news of her stepfather and her brother being actually back in France. Then they, with Louis Bonaparte, set off on their long journey south.

At that time, in going a long distance to meet anyone by road, there was always an element of chance as to whether the road chosen was the same as the one chosen by the person who was arriving. Now, in their endeavour to intercept Napoleon, Josephine, Hortense, and Louis drove south by way of Sens, Joigny, Anserre, and Chalon-sur-Saône. Napoleon, at the same time, was driving north through Moulins, Nevers, and Cosne. It was not till Josephine reached Lyons that she learned the truth. With what sickening apprehension must she have realized that the Bonapartes would have Napoleon to themselves for three

days ! What would they not say of her debts, of her relations with Hippolyte Charles, of her behaviour in general during these eighteen months ?

She and Hortense and Louis got back into their carriage, and the horses' heads were turned towards Paris.

At six o'clock on the morning of October the 18th Napoleon's carriage drew up before the familiar little house in the Rue de la Victoire. He went in and found no one there. Even when he was told that Josephine had gone to meet him, he would not believe it ; he was convinced, and appears all his life to have remained convinced, that, far from her having gone to meet him, she had rushed away because her sense of guilt was so poignant that she could not look him in the face. To find, instead of the welcome he had expected, those empty, silent rooms, had an inconceivable effect upon him. Years later he would talk of it : it gave him an impression of rebuff, of desolation of spirit from the memory of which he never recovered. His family were all round him, and were in a position to remove his last doubt as to whether the reports regarding Josephine and Hippolyte Charles were true. The shock of realization, coupled with her — to his mind — sinister flight, was so brutal that to part from her seemed a lesser evil than to continue their life together ; and when Josephine did at last arrive Napoleon refused to see her. Eugène and Hortense were, however, allowed into his room. Those two very youthful creatures, both of them possessed of extraordinary sweetness and integrity, were among the few people — Eugène already, and Hortense in the future — who were to hold Napoleon's affections ; and now, with all their young impetuosity, they urged the cause of their mother, to whom they were devoted. Josephine was crouched on a small staircase outside the door of the room from within which came voices and sobs. In Napoleon's close personal relations the sight of anyone broken and in tears seldom failed to move him, and, finally, he gave in. But the relationship between him and Josephine had received an irreparable jar. Originally, in his love for her, his senses and the most spiritual part of his nature were integrated : now they were divorced. Physically, she was to continue to appeal to him ; she

was to remain nearly up to, and again after, her death inexpressibly dear ; she was always to hold for him, beyond any other man or woman, a significance that he could not fathom ; but that conception of her in his mind as the blossoming of all things fair and lovely, that image which had shone with seraphic light : all this was gone for ever.

From now on it was she, and not he, who was to be the wooer. And, too, from now on what might be called the intangible Napoleon, the boy whose mind, as he lay that night within a wood, had envisaged a larger reality, had touched spiritual exaltation ; the lover who had written to Josephine ; the man who at moments was next door to a poet and a mystic — this Napoleon fades, and all but completely disappears : that earlier Napoleon, walled up within the mature career-monger, only becomes audible at rarest intervals. Any further development of that finer aspect of him was at an end ; and from now on the thought of self-glorification was to intensify till it became an obsession. At St. Helena, in talking to Gourgaud, he put the secret aim of his life into a sentence. " If I had succeeded I should have been the greatest man the world has known."

THE PERMONS GIVE A DANCE

In the autumn of 1800 Junot and Laure Permon became engaged. She declared she would be "glorified" in marrying him : for to the youth of France, Napoleon's young generals appeared as Knights of the Grail ; and Junot, as Napoleon's intimate friend, was in the forefront of this all but sacred group.

One day Madame Permon led her daughter into the drawing-room, and there Laure saw before her two great basket-trunks that breathed forth a delicious scent. One of these trunks was covered in rose silk embroidered with black chenille ; the other with green silk embroidered in orange, with Laure's cypher in the centre. From these trunks foamed a profusion of little packets tied up with pink or blue 'favours', which, when opened, revealed one embroidered and lace-edged Indian muslin frippery after another. These trousseau-trunks comprised *la corbeille* for which Junot had made Napoleon agree to pay. But even their charm fades before the *corbeille* that was Junot's own present. It was a creation fit for the Courts of Armida. A vast basket made in the shape of a vase covered in white and green velvet, both gold-embroidered. The stand of the vase was of bronze, the embroidered cover was surmounted with a fir-cone of bronze through which was thrust an arrow that pierced golden wreaths of olive and laurel. Within this capricious object lay cachemire shawls, veils of *point d'Angleterre*, lace to trim winter and summer gowns, entire dresses of white or black lace, pieces "of Turkish stuff that Junot had brought back from Egypt . . . gowns of Indian muslin embroidered in silver thread, and then flowers from Madame Roux, ribbons of all sizes and colours . . . fans, gloves, essences from Fargeon, from Riban ; sachets of Spanish leather and herbs from Montpellier. . . . On each side of the basket were two *sultans*." These *sultans* held various toilet articles of black enamel and gold, others of gold surmounted with pearls ; opera-glasses and a casket in blond tortoiseshell encrusted with diamonds ;

a pearl and diamond-studded comb, and a portrait of Junot by Isabey in the centre of a square, pearl-surrounded medallion. This, says Laure, "was of a size more suitable to be hung in a picture-gallery than round one's neck. *Enfin*, it was the fashion!"

Junot also gave Madame Permon one of these *corbeilles*. Hers sounds even more whimsical, as it had embroidered curtains of white gros-grain silk which, drawn back, revealed another treasure-house of cachemire shawl, glove, fan, lace, and ribbon luxury. If this was the kind of redundancy expected by the future wife and by the mother-in-law of one of Napoleon's generals, it is easy to realize why Josephine ran up all those debts which were to be such a source of dispute between her and her husband.

The day after Junot and Laure's wedding she was taken to the Tuileries to be presented to Napoleon and Josephine. It was arranged they should go after the opera. "So as not to arrive too late", writes Laure, "we came away in the middle of the *ballet de Psyché*. My heart was beating violently. . . . It was ten o'clock. We got down at the *pavillon de Flore*. . . . As we mounted the five or six steps that lead to the door on the left . . . we met Duroc and Rapp, who were coming down.

"How late you are!" said Duroc; "it's nearly eleven!" . . .

"At this moment the folding-doors of Madame Bonaparte's room were opened, and someone ran rapidly down the stairs. It was Eugène de Beauharnais. . . ."

On coming into the *salon* Laure says that for the first few moments she saw no one, partly "from the effect of my emotions", partly because the vast room that stretched away in front of her was in half-darkness. She received a general impression of yellow draperies and silk fringes. Away at the far end she saw two clusters of candlesticks standing on the mantelpiece, these clusters "surrounded with gauze", the effulgence of this soft light falling on three figures by the fireplace.

Laure, arm in arm with Eugène, felt him give her a slight pressure. "Don't be frightened," he said. "My mother and sister are so kind." Propelled across the room by him, she

approached the Napoleonic group by the fireplace. She saw that one of the seated figures was Madame Bonaparte, and that she was working at an embroidery frame propped in front of her. "The other side of the mantelpiece sat Mademoiselle Hortense de Beauharnais, that amiable, gentle, kind young girl, and too, so pleasing with her nymph-like figure, her beautiful fair hair, her graceful manner. . . . The First Consul was standing in front of the mantelpiece, his hands behind his back, and twiddling them in the way he had already got into the trick of doing. His eyes were fixed on myself, and, as soon as I began to see clearly, I saw him inspecting my every movement with a scrupulous attention that did not help to give me confidence. But I had made up my mind, and from this evening I was resolved not to be dominated by fanciful terrors, or, with such a man, I should be done for.

"Madame Bonaparte rose, came towards me, took both my hands, kissed me, and told me I could count on the friendship she promised. 'I have been Junot's friend too long . . . for his wife not to find in me the same feeling that I have for him, especially when she is like the one he has chosen.'

" 'Oh, oh ! Josephine !' said the First Consul, 'you do get to work quickly ! How d'you know that little elf is worth caring for ? Well, mam'selle Loulou — you see I don't forget the names of old friends — haven't you got a kind word for me ?'

"He had taken my hand, and, drawing me towards him, he looked at me so attentively that it made me lower my eyes. But, as I've said, I'd made up my mind.

" 'General,' I replied, smiling, 'it is not for me to speak first.'

"His frown would have passed unnoticed by anyone but me, but I had known that face a long time. He smiled almost immediately and said, '*Bien !* very well parried. . . . Oh ! her mother's quickness. . . . By the way, how is Madame Permon ?'

" 'Ill, General ; she is very unwell. . . .'

" 'Ah ! really, as bad as that. I'm sorry to hear it, very sorry. . . . You will give her my kind regards. She's wrong-headed, devilishly wrong-headed ! But she's got a heart and her soul is generous.' "

[Laure here interrupts herself to remark that Napoleon's

conversation was always "at the same time oriental and bourgeois".]

"I drew my hand away, which he had been holding all this time, and went and sat near Madame Bonaparte." After this the conversation became general.

2

The fashion of the day was to have a wedding dance, a *bal de noce*; and four or five days after Laure's wedding, one evening when Junot was dining with her and her mother, Madame Permon, arranging herself on her sofa after dinner, remarked, "*Allons, take your old place at the secrétaire, Madame Laurette, and let us make out the list. My house,*" she added, "*is very small, but it shall look like a basket of enchanted flowers.*"

Junot said that he would make out the list. Pen in hand, he waited for his mother-in-law to give him the names of the men to be invited.

"The First Consul of the French Republic one and indivisible ! . . . That is how you put it, isn't it ?" demanded Madame Permon.

" 'The First Consul !' cried the three of us ", writes Laure.

"Yes, the First Consul ! What do you find so astonishing in that ? Do you think because I'm a Corsican I want to carry on a *vendetta* ? Besides, it bores me. . . .

" ' *Eh bien . . .* ' said Junot, after a little more talk, ' tell me what time will suit you best . . . and I'll come and fetch you. . . . '

"My mother raised herself on her cushions and, looking at Junot with an air of astonishment, ' Come and fetch me ? And to go where ? '

" ' But . . . to go to the Tuileries so as to give your invitations yourself to the First Consul and to Madame B[onaparte]. '

" ' My dear Junot . . . you are altogether, but altogether, completely mad. . . . '

" ' But then how are you going to get him to come ? ' asked Junot, with a tone in his voice impossible to describe.

" ' Well, really ! how do you suppose I'm going to do it ! I shall send him an invitation the same as I do everyone else. The

only difference will be that it will be written by hand . . . with my own beautiful white paw which he knows so well. . . .’

“Junot marched up and down the room. ‘. . . But it can’t be done ! Better not invite him ! What an idea ! He’ll think you’re trying to be rude to him. . . .’

“ ‘Why rude to him ? Not at all, he won’t think it, and as you’ll see — after receiving his invitation, he will do as all men do who know how to behave, he will come and see me once before the ball or else he’ll leave a card at the door.’

“ ‘What !’ said Junot. ‘. . . You suppose he’s got visiting cards ?’

“ ‘And why should he not have ?’ replied my mother with the greatest sang-froid. ‘*Comment, mon cher enfant*, why do you think that because Bonaparte wins battles he should not pay calls ?’ and with great gravity she took a pinch of snuff.”

Junot is one of the lit names of Napoleonic history. In private life he was a facetious, rather bouncing young man who went red easily, perspired when excited, found self-expression in swearing, and whose mouth, when he was surprised, was inclined to fall open. It fell open now, writes Laure, and he had altogether such an air of stupefaction that, she says, “I let myself go in a paroxysm of mad gaiety. . . . Junot took the affair seriously. He walked about in silence, looking at my mother in consternation and asking her, by the supplication in his eyes, to be less *lofty*, and to bow herself before the all-luminous glory of his beloved General.” As for Laure herself, she remained immersed in “one of those fits of laughter only known to those of sixteen”,

The next day she, her brother, and Junot set off in a carriage for the Tuileries to ask Napoleon and Josephine to come to their party.

“Madame Bonaparte received us in the most gracious manner. In anything of this sort she was really charming. She promised to come to the ball. Then Junot told her we were going upstairs to the First Consul to persuade him to come with her.

“Madame Bonaparte smiled in a constrained and peculiar way that I did not like. ‘I’m very much afraid’, she said, ‘you will find it quite useless. Bonaparte goes out very little since he’s been in the Consulate. He’s only been to two parties. . . .’

“ ‘My mother will be so much the more pleased if he’s good enough to accept,’ I replied.

“Madame Bonaparte smiled, but in the same way, and repeated, ‘He hardly ever goes to a ball. You know he dances very little,’ she went on, glancing at me still with that tight-lipped smile which was natural to her.

“ ‘My sister can vouch for the contrary,’ said Albert with that charming manner he had in saying anything, however slight. . . . ‘The First Consul has often . . . yes, *often* danced the *Monaco* and *Les Deux Coqs* with Laurette, with my eldest sister playing the piano. Do you know, Madame, that we can almost dare to claim the rights of brotherhood with General Bonaparte ?’

“ ‘I know it, I know it,’ Madame Bonaparte hastened to reply. And she added, with an affectation of kindness ; ‘he’s often told me so himself’.”

After this decided triumph on the part of the trio they went up to Napoleon’s room. As they went in the First Consul looked up.

“ ‘Oh ! Oh !’ he said, smiling good-humouredly, ‘what does this family deputation signify ? No one is missing but Madame Permon. Does the Tuileries frighten her ? . . . Or do I ?’

“ ‘Ah ! Mon Dieu !’ I said quite low to my brother, ‘he suspects the truth ! We are done for.’

“ ‘*Mon général*,’ said my husband promptly, ‘Madame Permon wished to come with us but you know how ill she is, and it was quite impossible for her to leave her room to come and ask you a favour which means so much to her. My wife has been commissioned by her to make the request to you for form’s sake.’

“The First Consul turned towards me, and, looking at me smilingly, said, ‘Well, let us hear what it is ! I’m listening. What is it you want ?’

“It is difficult, or, rather, impossible to convey the charm of his expression when some pleasant thought made him smile. At these moments his soul was on his lips and in his eyes. Besides, one knows well enough how magical the power of this glance was to become later on. The Russian Emperor shewed how

strongly he had felt it when he told me, 'I never liked anyone better than this man.' "

Laure now explained her mission. "I had hardly finished my little harangue when he took both my hands and said, '*Eh bien !* most certainly I'll come to this ball. Why do you look as if you thought I was going to refuse ? I will come, and what's more, I shall be very pleased to.' Then he added . . . 'And all the same, I shall find myself in the midst of my *enemies* [those of the Faubourg Saint-Germain], for they say your mother's drawing-room is full of them.' "

The three were just going, when Napoleon exclaimed, "' By the bye, what day is the ball ? '

" 'Next Monday, *mon général*. I think it's the 10th of November.'

" 'When ? . . . November the 10th ? ' said the First Consul, going towards his writing-table. 'It seems to me . . . ' and while he spoke he hunted for a calendar, which he finally found. 'I was afraid so,' he said ; ' . . . the 10th of November is the anniversary of the 18th Brumaire. I can't accept the party for that day. And your mother won't get anyone,' he went on, looking at me and my brother. 'All your acquaintances of the Faubourg Saint-Germain will certainly not come out of their retreat to fête the anniversary of the re-establishment of the Republic. . . . I won't refuse Madame Permon's invitation if you will have it another day.'

"The thing was arranged at once. He fortunately chose the 12th himself. . . .

" 'Is Josephine coming ? ' he asked.

"I replied that she was . . . that Madame Bonaparte had accepted the invitation for herself and her daughter which, to my mother's regret, she had not been able to come and give herself.

" 'Oh ! I quite understand Madame Permon is ill . . . but there is laziness too, and then something else that I don't wish to speak of. Isn't that so, Madame Loulou ? '

"And he pulled my ear and my hair hard enough to make me cry. I was not altogether sorry, because, having tears in my eyes, it made a pretext for laughing, so as not to have to reply to his

brusque question, and to account for the redness that covered my face like a mask."

"Enough to make me cry." Another time Laure tells us that Napoleon pinched her nose to bleeding point. It was not only women who were upset at these ear-pullings and nose-pinchings. Tears would be seen in the eyes of even his toughest generals at the rough usage their faces had to undergo at Napoleon's hands. These facial tweakings to men and women were unpleasant enough, but when he applied the same trick to children it became definitely cruel. One day he tugged so hard at the ears of Caroline's little boy, Achille, aged three, that the child began to cry. Annoyed, Napoleon tugged still harder. The boy, screaming, shook his fist at Napoleon, shouting, "You are a villain, a wicked, wicked villain!" Napoleon could not stand criticism from anyone, and his reply was to give his nephew such a blow that he staggered and went stumbling across the room to Lucien, who relates the incident. In fact, whenever Napoleon was shown a child, even a new-born baby, he could not resist the pleasure, by nippings and teasings, of at once reducing it to tears. In fairness, however, it must be admitted that any child he had much to do with became devoted to him.

3

The evening of the Permons' dance, "My mother", writes Laure, "had surpassed herself in the arrangement of her charming little house". The staircase, the vestibule, all were so successfully decorated with evergreens and flowers, and so adroitly illuminated through coloured glass "that the whole effect held something magical".

"Madame Bonaparte arrived about nine with her son and daughter. . . . My mother went to meet Madame Bonaparte as far as the middle of the dining-room, whereas for the other women she had not gone further than the door of the drawing-room. . . . She led Madame Bonaparte to the easy-chair on the right of the fireplace, begged her, with the hospitable grace of the South, to consider herself as if at home, and must have appeared to her, as indeed she was, a charming and agreeable woman. . . .

"A few minutes before eleven there was heard the sound of the horses of the First Consul's escort. Soon after, the carriage came rapidly in through the gateway, and almost at once he himself appeared at the door of the first room with Junot and my brother. . . . My mother advanced towards him, and made one of her most graceful curtses. But he, beginning to smile at once, '*Eh bien*, Madame Permon, is that the way you receive an old friend?' And he held out his hand. My mother gave him hers, and in this manner he came into the ballroom. It was suffocatingly hot. The First Consul remarked on it," though it did not, she says, prevent him from keeping on his grey overcoat all the evening. Napoleon made the tour of the room, "his eagle eye, his quick glance, had at once noticed that among the number of women in the drawing-room a few had not got up when he came in. This annoyed him. He went into the bedroom still holding my mother by the arm, and seeming to look at her with admiration. . . .

"Monsieur de Talleyrand was at my mother's party. The First Consul, after having spoken to us all in the most agreeable manner, began talking with Monsieur de Talleyrand in my mother's bedroom, and continued without interruption for more than three-quarters of an hour. Towards midnight he came back into the drawing-room, and seemed determined to make himself agreeable."

The dance went on. Napoleon after a time found his way back to Madame Permon's bedroom and, seeing Laure there, "said something pleasant about my mother's party. These praises struck me as almost a reproach. My mother had been perfectly polite with the First Consul, but it seemed to me that perhaps she ought to have shown a more frankly cordial attitude. I went up to her, and told her what I thought. At the moment she was in her pretty rose-coloured boudoir, resting on a sofa. . . . 'Come,' I said, kissing her, 'come and walk about a moment.' I guided her without much trouble towards her room, where I imagined the First Consul still was. Indeed, he had not even changed his position . . . he came straight up to my mother. . . .

" '*Eh bien*, Madame Permon, what have you got to say to an old friend? It seems to me you forget them easily. . . . '

"There were very few people in the room," goes on Laure, "they were doing reels and English dances, and we were nearly alone." Napoleon began to complain of Madame Permon's stiff bow when she had seen him one night in his box at the opera. "One may well say", he protested, "that to ask friendship from a woman is to ask the sand in the desert to remain stationary." While he talked he walked to and fro in front of the fireplace : Madame Permon was sitting on a sofa facing him, "sunk into its cushions . . . her toe briskly on the move, usually the forerunner of a violent scene. Albert, who was coming and going between the drawing-room and the bedroom, at this moment came up to General Bonaparte and offered him an ice.

"I assure you we've no need of it, Madame Permon and I, *mon cher*, for, really, I think we're already petrified ! I know absence makes one forget, but not to this extent. . . .'

"Really !' said Madame Permon, 'Really ! it's quite permissible to forget at the end of several years. Did not you try to persuade me that it was difficult to remember, after several days' interval, a thing the carrying-out of which concerned someone's career, and affected his entire life ?'

"Ah !' said Napoleon, and in a second his expression darkened." But the next moment he had sat down on the sofa by her and, taking up her hand, kissed it.

A few minutes later two o'clock struck. Napoleon asked for his carriage.

"Won't you stay for supper ?" asked Madame Permon.

"Impossible," he said with a tone of regret, "but I shall come and see you again." But he did not come again. The striking of the clock had marked the moment when these two parted once and for all.

4

When, in the February of 1800, Napoleon, Josephine, and Hortense first went to live at the Tuileries, they found it a depressing experience. For the first few days Josephine could not escape from the thought of Marie Antoinette ; the memory of her was on every step of the great staircase, her unseen figure seemed still to linger about those wide-spaced rooms.

"I shan't be happy here," Josephine remarked to Hortense ;
" whenever I come in I've the most dismal presentiments."

Even Napoleon, immersed as he was in a thousand businesses, yet felt a chill in his spirit. "*Ceci est triste, général*," said Comte Roederer to him one day soon after they were installed.

"*Oui*," replied Napoleon, "*comme la grandeur*."

Hortense did not like it either, and would far rather have been back in the busily ordered life of Madame Campan's school than forced to yawn away the hours at the Tuileries by the side of Josephine. She was now seventeen, and managed to combine strenuous ideals and principles with a flower-like charm that she had inherited from her mother. For the first year or two after his marriage Napoleon's attitude to her was one of slightly vindictive teasing : it took time before he forgave her for having tried to keep him out of her family. Sometimes, in the evenings when they were all at la Malmaison, he would hand her some book, and tell her to read it aloud. "I would be so embarrassed at reading aloud before him and his staff", writes Hortense, "that I could not see a word." And then, cutting across the wretched girl's stammering and confusion, would come Napoleon's voice, "Then Madame Campan has not taught you to read?" Or, another evening, some public accounts would be thrust into her hands for her to read out the totals, and her scared eyes would mistake hundreds for thousands, and thousands for millions, and Napoleon, putting her right, would invariably end his correction with, "Then Madame Campan has not taught you to count?"

Regarding Josephine at the Tuileries phase, as we look back at her, not one but two Josephines emerge. First the façade Josephine who, as wife of the First Consul, and later, as wife of the Emperor, was the most satisfactory personality imaginable, acting as liaison between the Faubourg Saint-Germain and the upstart Republican figures : for, if before a doubtful denizen of the Faubourg, she now, compared with most of the men and women at Napoleon's Court, stood out in contrast as a representative of the *ancien régime* ; she became a means for that *fusion*, to use Napoleon's own word, which he was so anxious to bring about between the old society and the new. Josephine's tact never tripped. Her flair for saying the appropriate, the charming thing, was un-

erring. This surface Josephine, her gentleness softening the edges of Napoleon's brusqueness and acerbities, always displayed a fashion-plate appearance. Now her bedroom door opens, and there issues a gliding figure as closely covered with feathers as a swan, but on this human swan each feather is tipped with silver : another evening and she is changed into a white rose, a layer of living petals sewn all over her dress by the group of needle-women crowding in the room behind her. If Napoleon came down rather earlier than usual to dinner, and, going into Josephine's bedroom, found her still dressing, he would enter into every detail of the way her hair was done, and in a moment the looking-glass would be mirroring back his absorbed face as he bent over her head taking out and rearranging the flowers, calling Hortense in to admire the effect, and, she says, " all so seriously, it was enough to make one laugh ". This show-case Josephine could, too, turn a phrase. Her conversation, if not intellectual, was not lacking in piquancy. Talking one day of Murat and his passion for warfare, she exclaimed that he " would have sabred the Eternal Father himself."

But behind this outward Josephine was a very different woman. Her powers of weeping have become historic ; yet if one considers the mental and physical shocks she had already experienced — the legal action brought against her by her first husband ; her experiences during the French Revolution ; her imprisonment ; her husband being guillotined ; the near prospect that that too might be her own fate ; and, finally, a fall she had had from a balcony just after Napoleon set sail for Egypt, a fall so serious that it was hardly thought she would recover — if one takes all this into consideration it is understandable that her nervous system should have gone awry. Her general health too was gradually seeping away ; her teeth were decaying and falling out — those round her noticed how she tried to talk without opening her mouth more than necessary — hence that tight-lipped smile which displeased Laure Permon. Often she would be the victim of the most violent headaches. The upshot of her marriage with Napoleon had been on his part a gradual decline from his attitude of adoring lover ; on hers an apprenticeship in the art of being the indispensable wife of the most dazzling man in Europe : and

as the years passed she imperceptibly developed into just the completely devoted, pliable creature that Napoleon had expected she would be when they had first married. Several years of marriage, and he could give way to every extreme of egoism, knowing that her feeling for him would not be disturbed, and that passing reproaches and tears would be all she would venture on. For if at first she had been Matter too soft a lasting mark to bear, the stresses of life had, in developing her, made her at least capable of clearly receiving and holding the impress of another's personality. Her errant mind was at last arrested, her vague intelligence made aware of the consummate proportions of the man she had married. Her tragedy was that this awareness, this devotion came too late. Now Napoleon had become the pole-star of her every day and hour. She noted all the little things he liked, and all the little things he disliked. "Josephine possessed an exact knowledge of all the intricacies of my character, and with it an admirable tact," averred Napoleon. When he had his coffee after dinner, out would come her cautious hand to hold his cup while he talked : when they had arranged to go out driving at a certain time and he kept her waiting, as he often did, one hour, two hours, she made no demur. If on her side she kept him waiting a few minutes she received a rating. But for such marital inconsistencies her nature held no resentment. "People do not understand Napoleon," she said ; "he is hasty but he has a good heart." And she on her side always had an influence over him. Even up to the end of their marriage Josephine was, said her daughter, the one person who could sometimes persuade him to change his mind.

However, in certain ways Josephine either could not or would not alter : there would be violent scenes between her and Napoleon over her debts : actually, a great part of these were incurred by her generosity to the dispossessed ; but, all the same, her careless extravagance had no limits. And, too, she would talk unwisely to anyone she met about matters Napoleon did not wish talked about : her desire always to be agreeable had in this direction a most unfortunate side.

But in spite of these rubs there was still much harmony between them. After dinner at the Tuileries, Hortense, as she sat

talking on one side of the room with Napoleon's aides-de-camp and young generals, would watch her stepfather and her mother as, arm in arm, they walked talking together to and fro . . . to and fro . . . from end to end of the great room. Josephine's power to enchant Napoleon still held.

One may well ask where, in a nature seemingly as slight as hers, a nature whose insufficiencies are so obvious, could have been found her compelling power over such a man as Bonaparte. To discover the answer one must look to his subconscious, which, with him, was a potent factor. His own person — the small body and big head, the uncertain walk — was definitely bourgeois ; merely an instrument for the explosive energy of his mind : Josephine, with that flowing grace of limb and voice, that dulcet manner, was a means through which he sensed some hidden harmony, some synthesis of eternal values. This emotional filament that held him was delicate but it was strong. His infidelities, his egoism, his ambition constantly blotted out this lien between them, but, when the storm had quieted, this correlation was always found lying beneath, almost untouched. There was some quality within her that was linked with the subjective side of his nature. In Napoleon the administrator and soldier, inspiration mingled with his intellectual brilliance. Dimly, he was often aware that he was in touch with cosmic forces whose nature he could not determine. He would at times make conscious efforts to contact these forces. Madame de Rémusat, herself an exceptionally intelligent woman, says of him : " Gravity was the foundation of his character . . . that which comes from the depths of meditation. In his youth he was a dreamer ; later he became saddened ; and, later still, all this changed into almost continual ill-humour. When I first knew him [in 1802] he was immensely fond of everything that led to a state of reverie. Ossian, dim light, melancholy music. I have known him delight in the murmur of the wind, speak enthusiastically of the roaring of the sea. . . . When, on leaving his study in the evening, he would come into Madame Bonaparte's drawing-room, he would sometimes have the candles covered with a piece of gauze and enjoin complete silence . . . then he would listen to slow and soft pieces of music performed by Italian singers accompanied by only a small number

of instruments that were touched very lightly. Then we would see him fall into a reverie, which we were all so anxious not to disturb that we dared neither move nor stir. . . . On coming out of this condition . . . he was usually more serene and communicative, and liked to describe the sensations he had undergone. He explained the effect music had on him, always preferring that of Paesiello, 'because', he would say, 'it is more monotonous, and impressions that repeat themselves are the only ones that take a hold on one'. The geometrical turn of his mind always led him to analyse even his emotions. No man ever meditated so much as did Bonaparte on the 'why' that governs human actions." Coupled with this we have Laure Permon's account of the effect on him of hearing church bells at evening, or of seeing figures of women dressed in white passing along beneath the outstretched branches of trees.

It was, it seems, in this world of half-being that his spirit and Josephine's intermingled.

But the tormenting question for her was whether this tenuous relationship would always prove strong enough to prevent his getting their marriage annulled so as to obtain an heir, the possibility of which always hung before her eyes. The Bonaparte family, steadily hostile, had constituted themselves into a group of private detectives, ever on the watch for anything unpleasant they could hear of her so as to run with it to Napoleon. "All the members of the Emperor's family were strongly united so long as ambition did not enter in. Then they became disunited for a moment to make common cause against the most fortunate." So wrote Hortense, who knew them well. Not that, however much the Bonapartes kept their eyes and ears open, there was any breath of scandal around Josephine which they could catch. With the departure of Hippolyte Charles, any question of that was over.

5

When Napoleon settled at the Tuileries in 1800, he and Josephine had been married four years and there was still no prospect of a child. But Napoleon conceived a plan. Hortense should marry his brother Louis ; and he would consider their children as

his own. His brother and stepdaughter should, in fact, provide him with what Josephine could not. "Perhaps we shan't have any children," he said to Josephine. "I have brought up Louis, I look on him as my son. Your daughter is what you most cherish in the world. Their children shall be ours. We will adopt them, and this adoption will console us for having none of our own."

Hortense was not particularly anxious to marry Louis, but Napoleon brought pressure to bear where she was most vulnerable : in her affections. This marriage would, it was pointed out to her, "make amends" for her mother not having given Napoleon an heir ; it would act as a deterrent to the divorce that Josephine dreaded. Actually, family politics at this moment were far more complicated than Hortense realized. A rumour was creeping about that Napoleon had had intimate relations with her. But to read Hortense's own memoirs is to give this rumour the lie. The early hostility between her and her stepfather ; Napoleon's malicious teasing in the evenings at la Malmaison ; his gradually growing admiration for his stepdaughter's character as he saw her patiently bearing her disastrous marriage ; and finally, the manner in which Napoleon, years later, told her of this scandalous rumour, and her own reactions to this, the first news of it that had come her way — these considerations all clear her character and his completely.

In a drawing of Louis by Girodet we see him as a young man decidedly possessing the Bonaparte handsomeness, but in whose face and limbs the pulp all seems to have slipped downwards, giving his whole person a lachrymose, inept appearance. He looks uncertain of himself, and as if he were sulking over the knowledge of this uncertainty. Now, just before his marriage, it is said that Lucien told him of the rumour regarding Napoleon and Hortense. Louis, as we have seen several years back at Montebello, was a negative, unhappily disposed creature, and this horrible information on the eve of his marriage threw him into an almost abnormal condition. Bristling with suspicion and resentment, he set to work with every mental unkindness to turn the gentle, light-hearted creature he had married into the apprehensive, broken woman who after years of wretchedness managed at last to escape from him. Louis' pettiness of mind was incon-

ceivable : the fact that when he was created King of Holland he refused, out of jealousy, to allow his wife's name to be mentioned in the public prayers for the royal family is typical.

The marriage took place in 1802 ; and in October the following year Hortense gave birth to a son. Before he was seven months old Napoleon demanded that the baby should be given him to adopt. Louis refused : blandly urging Napoleon instead to divorce Josephine. Napoleon's brothers and sisters had heard of this idea of his adopting Louis' son and were filled with indignation. If the baby's father was a Bonaparte, his mother was a Beauharnais, and Napoleon's relations did not intend to allow this fact to be used as a leverage to upraise this infant. As regards the two families, it was always Bonaparte against Beauharnais, with Laetitia busily at work in the background.

The finale was that Napoleon remarked, " I shall pass a law that will make me at least master in my own family." And, before long, an article was inserted in the *Sénatus-consulte* which gave him the right to adopt his brothers' children and grandchildren at the age of eighteen.

Meanwhile, Napoleon saw no reason why he should remain faithful to Josephine, and did not. Neither could he understand why she should object to his vagaries. " Why should she mind diversions in which my affections are not involved ? " Round about this time he was having a liaison with the actress Made-moiselle Georges.

6

Soon after Laure's marriage to Junot she was staying at la Malmaison. She tells us how one day Josephine, overcome by one of her bouts of neuralgia, was lying down in her room when Napoleon came in and announced that he wanted her to get up and drive with him to see a new wooded property he had bought at Butard. Josephine demurred, but he was so insistent on her coming that, writes Laure, " she dared not refuse any longer ". " She asked for a shawl, a hat, and she, Madame de Lavalette, and I mounted into one of those calashes that are shaped like a basket, and driven by a young postilion." Napoleon was in as

high spirits "as a young boy on a holiday. He was on horseback, and would gallop on ahead, then come back to take his wife's hand.

"No words can express Madame Bonaparte's terror in a carriage. . . . This day, as it was the first time we had been to Butard, the postilion did not know the road. We came to a ravine or, rather, a stream whose two extremely high banks made the crossing difficult for a calash. As soon as Madame Bonaparte saw *this precipice*, as she called it, she cried out that she forbade our going on. The outrider, questioned by her, and knowing her nervousness, said the crossing might well be dangerous.

" 'Well, then,' she cried, 'I won't go to Butard by this road. Go and tell the First Consul that I'm going back to the Château unless he knows of another road.' And, ordering the postilion to turn round, we started back the way we'd come. But we had not gone ten paces before the First Consul had joined the calash.

" 'What's happened?' he said with that expression on his face that he alone had when something affected him disagreeably. 'What is this new caprice? Go back where you've come from!' he added, lightly touching the postilion's shoulder with his riding-whip. And putting spurs to his horse, he rode off immediately.

"We found him by the fatal stream looking at its certainly high banks. But as he had just crossed this actual stream on his horse everyone else had to go over. . . .

" 'Allons!' said Napoleon to the small young man who was conducting the calash, 'a good rush at it, and then give them their heads and you will get across.'

"Madame Bonaparte gave a piercing scream. . . . 'Nothing will make me stay in the calash. Let me get down! Bonaparte, I beg you for mercy's sake, let me get down . . . let me get down!' Weeping, she clasped her hands. . . .

"Napoleon looked at her. But, far from being touched, he shrugged his shoulders and told her, rudely enough, to keep quiet. 'It's childish! You are going over, and in the calash! Allons! do you understand?' he said, swearing at the postilion."

Laure herself now got out of the carriage. Napoleon helped her across the stream, but, on looking back, he saw the calash still waiting on the other side. He crossed back again himself. Jose-

phine was weeping piteously and asking the postilion "to wait one more minute". Napoleon went up to the calash and, bringing down his whip with all his force across the shoulders of the postilion: "*Ah ça ! drôle que tu es !*" he cried, "will you do what I tell you?"

On the instant the postilion lashed the horses; they leaped forward, down the bank and across the stream, but the calash was given such a violent shaking that some of the underwork was broken. "As for Madame Bonaparte, she was weeping . . . all this disfigured her very much. Josephine no doubt knew it, for she had enveloped herself in a big muslin veil that she had on her head, and we heard nothing but her sobs, which went on till we got to Butard. And when, on getting down, Josephine presented her husband with her tearful face he showed more than ill-humour — it was anger. He pulled her, roughly enough, out of the carriage, and leading her apart a little away from the wood, we could hear him continuing to scold her, and with all the more energy because on setting off in the morning he had prepared himself for a cheerful expedition."

The only possible excuse for Napoleon's savagery is that in his youth he had been accustomed to Corsican women: women tough as a horse. Laetitia, for instance, would have found this kind of treatment most invigorating. But the effect on her brittle-nerved daughter-in-law was, naturally, lamentable. And this incident was not an isolated experience. "This little scene", says Laure, "was typical of many things that I noticed in the course of time."

7

But in general the atmosphere at la Malmaison was one of serenity. One sees the house — a typical small French château with its irregular roof, and long row of bay-trees standing in square tubs round the walls — coming to life in all the soft shimmer and glitter of a summer morning; the grouped trees in the park making a Watteau background; the air pellucid from the river that slipped along near by. "Nothing", writes Laure in nostalgic memory, "was fresher, greener, more umbrageous." The women spent pleasant dawdling days talking, or reading

the papers. But sometimes there would be in the air a sense of something special, everywhere a twitter of excitement over the rehearsals for a play in la Malmaison theatre. Napoleon's interest in these theatricals was intense, he himself arranging the repertory. "One must have seen the First Consul in his function of impresario", writes Laure, "to know him under an altogether different aspect from the usual portraits of him."

As a rule he did not appear till the six o'clock dinner, having been working for twelve hours or more either in his study or in a small garden kept entirely for him, and connected with his study "by a bridge covered with ticking. . . . This bridge . . . was arranged like a little tent, making another room for him. He would have a table brought there and would work quite alone. . . . 'When I'm in the air,' he said, 'I feel that my ideas are loftier and more extended.' " When he felt he needed exercise he would get up and walk about his secluded garden.

On summer evenings the whole party would have dinner out of doors on the lawn in front of the house, and afterwards, if he had no work to do, Napoleon, flinging his coat to the ground, would cry "*Jouons aux barres !*" a game that seems to have been the equivalent of our prisoner's base. Napoleon, running "like a hare", cheated in every direction and knocked people down, and the garden would become a scrimmage of rushing laughing figures. At other times he would feed a pet gazelle with the tobacco from his pouch and, with his bourgeois sense of humour, encourage it to trample and tear the women's dresses. Josephine obviously disliked all this rough-and-tumble, for, trailing away in her long white dress with other of the women, she would go and lean on an iron balustrade at one end of the lawns.

That aesthetic sensibility which she showed in her clothes she displayed too in her garden and, like all the fashionable horticulturists of the day, would have packets of seeds sent her from abroad. Nineteenth-century British chivalry had prompted the order which had been given that when a French ship was taken, and packets of flower-seeds were found on board addressed to Josephine, they were to be forwarded to her. When she became Empress, the la Malmaison flowers had their own accredited



LA MALMAISON

NAWAB SAJJAD JUNG RAHADUR

THE KING OF ROME ASLEEP

From a portrait by Prudhon



portrait-painter ; and in Redouté's coloured plates there still beautifully display themselves the various roses that Josephine favoured. Now, during these evening games, as she and her friends leaned upon the balustrade, it would have been that poised hour at the end of a summer's day when in the expansive glow every petal and blade stands forth illumined, and evening bird-notes make their sweet incisions in the air. . . . Gradually, as we look, all the figures in the garden drift back into the house : imperceptibly the dusk deepens, and moths, intenser dusk themselves, waft and fly.

By the time twelve o'clock struck, the house, Laure tells us, would be in profound stillness. Nothing appeared to be stirring. But looking out of her window before going to bed, she would see something that soundlessly moved through the transparent darkness, threading in and out of the trees, emerging, disappearing : one of the mounted and armed *guides à cheval* who were keeping watch over Napoleon. One night when la Malmaison slept, there was suddenly the report of a gun fired close to the house. Another second, and the door of every room along Laure's corridor had burst open to let out its occupant. "The women dressed in one skirt only, the men in pantaloons. The First Consul was already in the corridor, in a dressing-gown, a candlestick in his hand, and calling out in his strong, sonorous voice, 'Don't be frightened ! It's nothing.'

"He was as calm as if his sleep hadn't been disturbed. . . . I was completely absorbed in watching him, and especially in examining the expression of his face at such a moment. It was quiet and easy without being indifferent. . . . His destiny was not accomplished, and he knew it. . . . Rapp and Monsieur Lacuée . . . came back from the park, where they had gone at once, and announced that the horse of one of the *guides*, while he was crossing the lawn in front of the château, had fallen in stepping on a mole-hill. In the fall his carbine had gone off."

Napoleon began to laugh, calling out, "Josephine, don't go on crying ! It's a mole-hill that's caused all the trouble. . . . As for the *guide*, two days' arrest to teach him not to cross my grass on his horse. . . . Good night, ladies, go to bed again, and sleep well."

The summer of the calash incident la Malmaison was full of people. Laure Junot, as we have seen, was among them, but her husband, now Commandant of Paris, only came on certain days, always going back to Paris to sleep.

During this visit of Laure's, Josephine went off for several weeks for treatment at Plombières in the hope that it might help her to produce another child. With her departure there inevitably came to those at the château a sense of expansion, of *laissez-aller*. During this time, writes Laure, "people frankly amused themselves . . . never have I seen the First Consul so amiable as he was then for a fortnight. He was *amiable*, that is the only word to describe it. He was always in a good temper, laughing gaily, often amusing himself by making me recite verses in Italian; and afterwards we would play at *reversi*. Then it was laughter, laughter!" The child was clever with her prodigious host, and writes that she had discovered that he liked people to be at their ease with him: but, all the same, not too much at their ease.

In these, her early married days, Laure lived in a continuous, summer-sky exaltation of spirit. Her young, radiant face, her little airs of self-assurance, her chirping repartees — "Her mother over again! absolutely her mother over again!" Napoleon would cry out — all this enchanted him. As for Laure herself, she found her perfect complement in her bouncing young husband; they were immersed in all the sweetness of the first years of a happy marriage. Junot had dog-devotion to Napoleon. He was ready at any moment to be laid, a living sacrifice, on the Bonaparte altar. "A faithful friend is made in the image of God," Napoleon had exclaimed in his extravagant way when, both of them derelict young men in Paris, Junot had helped him as much as he possibly could from his own depleted pocket. To him, as to all of the group of young generals round the First Consul, Napoleon existed in a realm of light: he was the bright particular star which each one in his heart would have himself wished to be.

During the time that Josephine was away from la Malmaison,

"I was ", says Laure, " sound asleep one morning. All at once I was awakened by a very violent knock . . . and on the instant I saw the First Consul close by my bed ! I thought I was dreaming. . . . He began to laugh.

" ' It's really me,' he said, ' why this astonishment ? ' "

" It only took me a moment to wake up completely ; in reply, smiling, I stretched my hand towards the window, which the great heat had made me leave open. The sky was still that living blue which follows on the first hour of dawn. One could see by the sombre green of the trees that the sun had barely risen. I picked up my watch, it was not yet five o'clock.

" ' Really ! ' he said when I showed it him, ' as early as that ? *Eh bien*, so much the better, we'll have a chat.' And, taking an armchair, he placed it at the foot of my bed, sat down on it, crossed his legs, and settled himself there as he used to do five years before in my mother's easy-chair in the Hôtel de la Tranquillité. In his hand he had an enormous packet of letters."

Napoleon opened his letters, read them, occasionally gave Laure one to look at, once or twice got up and went over to her writing-table, took up a pen and scribbled some comments. . . . A clock was heard striking six.

" ' The devil ! it's six o'clock. . . . Adieu, Madame Junot,' and, coming up to my bed, he pinched my foot through the bed-clothes, smiled at me with that charm that lit up his face, and went off singing — in spite of the beautiful sonorous tones he had when speaking — in a false shrill voice,

*Non, non, z'il est impossible
D'avoir un plus amiable enfant.
Un plus amiable ? Ah si vraiment."*

The next morning it was the same. Violent knock at her door. Entrance of Napoleon, who exclaimed, " ' Why d'you sleep with your window open ? It's fatal for women who have teeth like pearls, as you have. You mustn't run the risk of losing your teeth. . . . ' And he started to read his papers, making marks against several lines with his finger-nail. Sometimes he shrugged his shoulders, muttering a word or two I didn't catch."

Finally, pinching her foot as before, he said good-bye and

vanished. As soon as he had gone Laure called her maid, and told her not to open her door when anyone knocked so early.

She thought over the situation, and miserable apprehension rose within her. "Confusedly I foresaw a misfortune of which the consequences might be terrible. . . . I spent the night in tears. I would, I believe, have given years of my life . . . to the familiar demon who would have transported me to my mother or my husband. I did not know what to decide on. . . . At last I went to sleep . . . but my sleep was broken, and the first light of morning had scarcely pierced my *persiennes* when I awoke. I thought I had heard a sound near my door. I listened and could hear nothing." It suddenly struck her she had better actually take the key out of the further door for fear the maid would not have the courage to refuse to open it to Napoleon, "and I was determined these morning visits should not go on. I saw no harm in them. But all the same I knew the world well enough to judge of the effect they might have."

Napoleon also knew quite well the effect they would have. In the high-tensioned social atmosphere that surrounded him, every smallest action, every slightest predilection, was noted, commented on, and conclusions drawn. He knew, too, Junot's hot loyalty for himself, that his friend was one of those generous spirits who do live by admiration. Napoleon knew too that he left his child-wife alone with him at la Malmaison with the same confidence as he would have left her in a church.

Now, determined to make all secure, Laure got up very quietly and, crossing her maid's room, crept to the further door and took the key. Then she lay down again. "I had my watch close to me. I watched the movement of the minute-hand. When it pointed to six o'clock I heard the First Consul's foot in the corridor. He stopped at the door and knocked, but much less loudly than the preceding days. He waited a moment, then knocked again. My maid then probably woke up, and I heard her tell him I'd taken the key. He said nothing, and went away.

"When the sound of his steps was lost on the stairs leading to his study I breathed as if the heaviest of loads had been lifted off my chest; then I began to sob again. I looked on the First

Consul as my brother, and, too, the feeling I had for him had always rested on a profound admiration : in fact I looked on him more as a father. He was my husband's protector, his support ; Junot himself had the greatest affection for him. With what eye would he view this kind of gross mistrust that I was showing him [Napoleon] in depriving him of the moment's distraction he got from coming to talk with a child whom he had all but seen born ? Yes, but other people, I said to myself, will not look on the affair so innocently ! I had already noticed some malevolent glances, and others *too benevolent* . . . and I was determined not to merit them.

"I went to sleep again. . . . I felt quieter. I was therefore sound asleep when my door was opened, pretty forcibly, and I saw the First Consul.

" ' Then you're afraid I'm going to murder you ? ' he asked, with such pronounced harshness that it swept away all my fears. . . .

"I told him that, having got up very early, I had gone into my maid's room and that . . . I had taken the key. . . .

"Napoleon fixed me with eyes that were those of an eagle and a falcon combined, and did not reply. I was wrong not to tell him at once what I had settled to do, but I felt foolishly timid. . . .

" ' Tomorrow we are hunting at Butard,' said the First Consul. ' . . . We shall be starting early, and so that you'll be ready I'll come and wake you myself. And as you're not living here in the middle of a horde of Tartars, don't barricade yourself in as you have done. Besides, you see that your precaution against an old friend has not stopped his coming to you. Adieu ! '

"And he went, but this time without singing. I looked at my watch. The hand pointed to nine o'clock. I was in despair. This was the hour when all the maids would be coming and going in the house to attend to their mistresses, and it was impossible that one of them at least had not seen him coming into or leaving the room, and that was quite enough for all the château to get to know of it. But how, I asked myself, did he get in ? I called Mademoiselle Caroline, and asked her why she had not followed my orders. She told me the First Consul had opened the door

with a pass-key, and that she had not dared to stop him going to my room. . . .

"I began to think what I had better do. Ask for a carriage from Madame Louis Bonaparte was my first idea. But what reason could I give? Go round to the stables? Ask Jardin, the first equerry, to let me have a pair of horses and a calash? He would certainly have done it, but how could I get out the first word of such a request? . . . my seventeen years made me timid.' She dressed and went to *déjeuner*. Her mind was a see-saw of indecision. "I did not know what to do. . . . 'Mon Dieu!' I said, letting my head fall into my hands, 'mon Dieu, what shall I do?'

"At that instant I felt two arms round me with a gentle pressure, and a well-known voice said, 'What is the matter, my Laure?' . . . It was my husband! I sprang into his arms, I threw mine round him, I squeezed him, I embraced him, I kissed his hair, his hands. My caresses were so energetic that I hurt my cheek against one of his epaulettes, and it began to bleed." Junot was naturally bewildered, and a confused talk ensued between them; Laure trying to persuade him to let her go back to Paris without telling him the reason why; he insisting she ought to stay as arranged till Josephine returned. It shows the stuff the child was made of that she was determined, by keeping her problem to herself, not to precipitate a scene that would ruin her husband's career and injure his devotion to Napoleon. Now, her plan to leave la Malmaison having failed, she worked out another. After dinner, telling Junot she wanted him to take a letter to her mother, she took him to her room while she wrote it. Then she used every cajolery to persuade him to stay the night at la Malmaison. "It was impossible for me to find any other expedient than that of getting Junot to stay with me. The moment I mentioned it he cried out as if I were starting talking again of my going off with him.' But in the end she got her way.

"Luckily I needn't fear arrest any more!" laughed Junot, secure in his post as Commandant of Paris, "but you'll get me a scolding!" It was now past midnight.

The hours passed. . . . Dawn came. "Five o'clock", writes Laure, "had just struck from the church at [Ruel] when I woke

up. . . . All was as quiet in the château as if it were the middle of the night. It was a lovely day, and, across my half-open *persiennes*, I saw the beautiful shadowy shapes in the park poised in the fresh morning air, while a golden ray already gilded their tops. All this silence and sense of repose were in such striking contrast to the anxiety which, in spite of myself, had got the upper hand of me, that, when my glance fell on the sleeping Junot lying by my side, I could not help trembling. He slept peacefully. . . . that male and beautiful face already swarthy from the African sun, that forehead, so young and yet already ploughed with scars. That fair head, the features so full of character, entwined with a shawl of Turkish muslin that he'd come across the night before and had used as a nightcap, made a picturesque sight. Junot, without being remarkably handsome, had, taken altogether, something that made one say *Il est bien !* At this time, especially. He was barely twenty-eight, and youth still more enhanced his graces. Half-past five had just struck when I heard the sound of the First Consul's step at the end of our long corridor. My heart beat violently. I would have given my life for Junot to have been in Paris. I would have liked to have him made invisible, to have hidden him. . . .

"Another minute, and Napoleon was at my door ! . . .

"The door was opened noisily. 'What ! Still asleep, Madame Junot. On a day we're going out hunting ! I told you that . . .' While speaking, the First Consul had made the necessary circuit to come round facing the bed, he had lifted the curtain, and remained motionless at the sight of that well-known face, that face of the most faithful, the most devoted friend. . . .

"On his side, Junot, scarcely awake, leaning on his elbow, gazed at the First Consul with an air of astonishment that would have diverted a third person. . . . His strongly-coloured face, with the red and brown turban round his head, the animated expression of his mobile countenance — all gave to the scene an oriental character. But in Junot's face there was no anger.

"*'Eh ! mon Dieu, général,* what d'you come into our wives' rooms for at this hour ?' And this was said quite good-humouredly.

"*'I've come to wake Madame Junot to go out hunting,'*

replied the First Consul in the same tone, but after having shot a long look at me. . . . 'But I see she's had a *réveil-matin* far earlier than I am. I've a right to scold, for, after all, Monsieur Junot, you've been smuggled in here.'

"*'Mon général,'* said Junot, 'if ever fault was worthy of being forgiven, it is mine. If you had seen this little siren yesterday evening using all her magic . . . to seduce me . . .'

"The First Consul smiled. . . . 'Therefore I do absolve you, and entirely. It is Madame Junot who will be punished.' And to prove his forgiveness he said he would give Junot a mount so that he could come out hunting. 'Adieu, Madame Junot,' he said as he went off. *'Allons, get up and make haste.'*

"*'Ma foi,'* said Junot, jumping out of bed. . . . 'What kindness ! . . . Instead of scolding me, instead of sending me like a blackguard back to Paris to do my duty ! My Laure, you must admit that he's not only really an astounding being but beyond ordinary humanity !'

"When everyone was ready, and had collected on the stone bridge in the garden, several calashes and led horses were brought round. A small calash *à la Daumont* drove up, the First Consul got in, and beckoned to me. 'Madame Junot, will you honour me with your company ?'

She got in without a word. Napoleon turned towards her, crossed his arms, and said, "You think yourself very clever ?"

"I said nothing. He repeated : 'You think yourself very clever, don't you ?'

There ensued some *tu quoques*, and then, "'Can you explain', asked Napoleon, 'the reason why you persuaded your husband to stay on ? . . .'

"'I love Junot. We are married, and I thought there could be nothing scandalous in a husband remaining with his wife.'

"'You knew I'd forbidden it, and you knew too that my orders must be carried out.'

"'They have nothing to do with me. When the consuls have signified their wishes regarding the degree of intimacy that ought to exist between two married persons, and the number of days and hours that ought to be accorded to their interviews, then I will see that I submit. Up till then, General, my own will

and pleasure . . . will be my only law.' ”

It is no wonder Napoleon found the child amusing. But what he was really concerned about was to know whether she had told Junot of his early morning visits ; and with his usual unfairness he threw off: “ There is only one worse thing you may have done, and that is to have told Junot what you have so happily imagined.” She assured him she had told no one of the doings of the last few days. “ We were on the point of arriving,” she goes on, “ we already heard the hounds, the horn, all the sounds of the hunt.”

“ ‘ And you give me your word of honour that Junot knows nothing of all this . . . ’ ”

There was more talk, and they arrived at the meet. “ You are wise to go away this morning,” Napoleon finally remarked. “ After all this silly business it won’t be any great pleasure for you and me to see each other. . . . Jardin ! my horse.”

And, himself opening the door of the calash, he jumped to the ground, mounted his horse, and rode off at a gallop.

9

A figure well known to Hortense during her many hours of sitting about among the yellow silk furnishings of the drawing-room at the Tuileries or, equally, among the statues and the mosaics of the drawing-room at la Malmaison, was that of Napoleon’s Foreign Minister, Talleyrand. “ For many years I have seen him ”, she writes, “ come into the *salon* at la Malmaison with his cold and nonchalant air, trailing his foot, leaning against the first chair he came to, and scarcely bowing,” and she explains how this indifference to other people, and economy of words so impressed them that when he did condescend to speak the effect was remarkable.

It is interesting to watch, after Clari de Rémusat’s arrival at Court in 1802, her and Talleyrand’s gradual approach to each other. It was during Napoleon’s tour of Belgium, when Clari de Rémusat might find herself waiting hour after hour in the same ante-room as Talleyrand (“ the idleness of Court life ”, wrote Clari, “ makes some days seem a hundred hours long ”), while Napoleon in the room next door talked to some Belgian dignitary ;

it was during these enforced, yawning intervals that Foreign Minister and Lady-in-waiting started the talks that were finally to lead to the most easeful intimacy and mutual confidence. The naïve Lady-in-waiting, with at that time a rather solemn admiration for the First Consul and all his works, and at the moment all aquiver at the display of flags and garlands, triumphal arches and bands that marked Napoleon's progress through the Belgian towns, positively could not understand why her companion did not seem the least moved by all this fanfaronade. He appeared in fact to be "without any kind of illusion over, or enthusiasm for, what went on around us. . . . The calmness, the indifference of Monsieur de Talleyrand disconcerted me. '*Eh ! bon Dieu,*' I ventured to say to him one day, 'how can you possibly bear to go on living . . . without getting any emotion from what goes on round you, or from what you do yourself?'"

"Ah !" exclaimed Talleyrand, "what a woman you are, and how young !"

Clari de Rémusat's husband was sixteen years older than she, and they were a completely united couple. Before the Revolution he had been a magistrate, and nothing except the loss of all his money would have made him accept a post as Court official : however, they gradually, he as Grand Chamberlain, she as Lady-in-waiting and confidante of Josephine, became outstanding figures in Napoleon's entourage. But at heart they formed their own conclusions, kept their own valuations, and, with Talleyrand, in time composed a little group of three, bound together not only by affection but by relief at finding in each other an integrity rare at the Tuileries.

Talleyrand had the greatest admiration for Clari's character. She was, he wrote, "more ingenious, more piquant in her favourable manner of judging than malignity could be in the knowing art of insinuation and reticences." Napoleon viewed this friendship between the Rémusats and Talleyrand, as he viewed all friendships between those who served him, with distrust. In his opinion, the eyes of everyone should be turned, not on each other, but on him, and him alone ; and he would try, but without effect, to split the good understanding between the trio. This desire, to break up friendships for fear they might act in some way to

his own detriment, was one of the many unpleasant idiosyncrasies that Napoleon developed as the years went on. Another was his theory that "uneasiness stimulates zeal", on which principle he purposely kept everyone round him in a state of nervous apprehension. No matter how perfectly he was served, he would deliberately appear dissatisfied. But one day, perhaps suddenly seeing himself mirrored in the harassed eyes of some official, he exclaimed, "The really happy man is the man who hides himself away from me in the . . . depths of his province . . . When I die, the universe will give one great 'ouf!'"

10

Diametrically opposed in instinct, Napoleon and Talleyrand acted each as the complement of the other. Napoleon always remained fundamentally a child of nature: Talleyrand was compact of all artifice. But this artifice was suffused with some secret grace of being, and possibly by reason of this hidden quality he came in order of Napoleon's affections next to Josephine as the person who most stirred and drew him. There is a peculiar scene which was described to Madame de Rémusat either by her husband or by Talleyrand himself.

When leaving Mayence for the Prussian campaign in 1806 the moment came for Napoleon to say good-bye to Josephine. It was evening, and Napoleon was in his study giving final instructions to Rémusat and to Talleyrand while outside in the chill autumn air his carriage waited at the door. Napoleon asked Rémusat to go and find Josephine. In a few moments he was back in the room with her. She was in tears. Napoleon, touched in his turn, took her in his arms, seemed scarcely able to let her go, and was himself on the verge of breaking down. Then, still holding her pressed to him, "he went up to Monsieur de Talleyrand, and holding out his hand to him he clasped both of them in his arms, and, speaking to Monsieur de Rémusat, he said, 'It's very painful, all the same, to leave the two people one most loves.'" As he spoke the tears ran down his face, he became convulsive, his body shook, and then suddenly he began to vomit. They made him sit down; they made him

drink some orange water ; but for a quarter of an hour he could not restrain his sobs. Then quite suddenly he got up, shook Talleyrand by the hand, kissed Josephine, and said to Rémusat, "The carriages are round, aren't they? Warn the gentlemen, and let us set off."

By reason of his birth and upbringing Talleyrand possessed much that Napoleon did not : to his finger-tips he was instinct with that indefinable air of the man who from his earliest days has been accustomed to good society : it was in his system, he looked it, he breathed it : in Napoleon's raw-edged Court Talleyrand's scented person, his impregnable self-assurance, his "graciously insolent" manner were a living reminder of what was now superseded. And strange indeed must the imperial Court have often seemed to this figure from the past : Berthier, invariably gnawing his nails as he talked ; Murat, with his melodramatic clothes ; Napoleon pinching the noses of Court ladies ; and, at an official interview, carrying his infant nephew about in his arms as if he were a nursery-maid.

Talleyrand's mind was whittled to the finest, to the most exquisite point of subtlety : the virtuosity of his conversation, as a display of wit, culture, intelligence, and elegance combined, could not be surpassed. Napoleon's mind was composed of fiery particles : as he attempted to give vent to the rush of thoughts that flooded him he was often stumbling and confused, but all the same his words, his pungent imagery, possessed a dynamic force that penetrated the listener.

If Talleyrand drew Napoleon, Napoleon had, in his younger days, forcibly impressed the elder man. On the occasion when they first met each other, memories of those scornful cadets at l'École Militaire had assailed Napoleon, and, hero of the Italian campaign though he was, he winced at the thought that, socially, this member of the *ancien régime* might despise him. They had already corresponded, and Talleyrand had written to the youthful general in the most flattering manner, but this had not been sufficient altogether to reassure him. He had obviously thought out beforehand what he could say to elevate himself socially in Talleyrand's eyes, and when they met, he rather pathetically, instead of letting well alone, came out laboriously with : "You are the

nephew of the Archbishop of Rheims. . . . I too have an uncle, who is an archdeacon in Corsica. He brought me up. In Corsica, you know, an archdeacon is the same as a bishop in France."

It is curious how few of Napoleon's historians take into account this lifelong uneasiness at the back of his mind as to his social position, a concern woven inextricably into his constant urge to elevate himself still higher. Even on St. Helena he was still extraordinarily occupied with it. To be called General Bonaparte instead of Emperor, to be denuded of this title for which he had done violence to all his early republican principles, was the one really painful injury inflicted on him, the true main-spring of his indignation. During his captivity General Gourgaud, listening to him day after day, said that the root of all his manifold complaints was that he had been an Emperor and was one no longer.

But now, in this his first interview with Talleyrand, he need not have fretted himself as to their relative social standing. Talleyrand was occupied with all the rare influences, the living content that flowed from this young prodigy who confronted him. "At first sight", writes Talleyrand, "his face appeared to me charming. A score of victories go so well with youth . . . with pallor, and with an appearance of exhaustion."

One might say of Talleyrand that as regards public life he could not have been more than he was: that which he was capable of being he filled out, as diplomat, politician, and worldling, to its fullest extent. But Napoleon might have been more than he was; he possessed varied possibilities of development that never came to fruition. Talleyrand's mind is like an elaborate diagram: intricate but, when closely examined, perfectly comprehensible. With Napoleon, the more he is studied, the more we are aware that the Napoleon we know was only part of the real man: the antennae of his mind touched the impalpable; his essential being remains a mystery. He was not one man, he was a congeries of men.

JOSEPHINE SUPERSEDED

ONE day in 1803 when Napoleon and his brothers, Lucien and Joseph, were all talking together, the conversation turned to Lætitia. Lucien himself tells us what passed.

"Apropos of Mama," remarked Napoleon, "Joseph really ought to tell her not to go on calling me *Napolion*. It's a name that doesn't sound well in French. Besides, it's an Italian name. Let Mama call me *Bonaparte* like everyone else — above all, not *Buonaparte*, that would be still worse than *Napolion*. But no, let her say the First Consul, or the Consul *tout court*. Yes, I like that best. But *Napolion*, always this *Napolion* — it provokes me."

"All the same," put in Lucien, "*Napolion* in French, *Napoléon*, is a very fine name — at least, in my opinion. There's a grandeur about it."

"You think so?"

"Something imposing," continued Lucien.

"You think so?"

"Even majestic."

"*En effet*," broke in Joseph.

Napoleon turned to him. "You think so too? . . . *Enfin* it is my name. I admit it has more solemnity than *Bonaparte*, which, nevertheless . . . But I'm not the only one to bear it, and . . . Napoleon has too the advantage of being new . . ."

"If you'll allow me to say so," finished up Lucien, "I stand for the name of Napoleon. A new great man, a new great name!"

"Flatterer . . ." gave out the Consul, "smiling graciously enough", and in the end he himself admitted it was "a very fine name".

"Then," protested Lucien, "why don't you want Mama to go on calling you by it?"

"Well, in the first place, because she pronounces it the Italian way. It's very annoying. And however much she tries to frenchify it, she can't. Between ourselves, our mother has never

known how to speak Italian or French. It's very annoying."

"But", here broke in Lucien and Joseph together, "our mother speaks Italian as it's spoken in Corsica."

"And that is precisely what I'm saying ! When we receive Monsieur de Lucchesini, for instance, at the Tuileries, foremost diplomat, fluent speaker *par excellence* in every language, do you suppose I feel much flattered when I hear my mother reply in *patois* to a phrase couched in purest Tuscan ?"

2

The atmosphere of the beginning of 1804 was tense with the Cadoudal conspiracy ; the object of which was to kidnap, if not to murder, Napoleon. This was followed by the execution of the Duc d'Enghien whom Napoleon, for ulterior reasons, chose to consider as one of the conspirators.

On a Sunday in the middle of March Napoleon, Josephine, and Madame de Rémusat drove down to la Malmaison : Napoleon in one carriage ; his wife and Clari de Rémusat in another. It is through Clari de Rémusat's eyes that for the next few days we watch Napoleon brazening out what he knew in his heart was a crime.

Now, as the two women drove along, Josephine said, "I'll confide to you a great secret. This morning Bonaparte told me that he sent Monsieur de Caulaincourt to the frontier to arrest the Duc d'Enghien. They're going to bring him to Paris."

"Ah ! mon Dieu, madame . . . and what are they going to do with him ?"

"I gather they're going to try him."

"These words", says Madame de Rémusat, "gave me the strongest sensation of fear that I have, I think, ever felt in my life. So much so that Madame Bonaparte thought I was going to faint, and lowered all the carriage windows."

"I've done what I can", Josephine went on, "to get him to promise that this prince shall not be put to death, but I'm dreadfully afraid he's made up his mind."

"What, you think he'll have him executed ?"

"I'm afraid so."

"We both arrived at la Malmaison quite overcome", writes Madame de Rémusat. It was now about four o'clock, and Clari went straight to her room. Up till now she had in her youthful enthusiasm looked on Napoleon, this young republican god, as made of heroic stuff, and now, to see him step down from the pedestal on which she had placed him, and, before her eyes, turn into practically a murderer, shook her indescribably. "I took refuge in my room, where I wept bitterly; my whole mind was disturbed. I had loved and admired Bonaparte, I had believed him called by an invincible power to the highest destinies, I had let my young imagination become exalted about him; all at once the veil that had covered my eyes had been pulled aside."

But, whatever she felt, she had to conceal it when she went down to dinner at six o'clock; for Josephine had made her promise not to show by her manner that she had heard anything. As she came to the door of the *salon* she felt, so she tells us, that now, when her eye fell on Napoleon, he would surely look quite a different man from the one she had known. She opened the door and went in. There sat the familiar figure playing chess: there before her was the pale, self-assured face, the thoughtful, penetrating eyes she knew so well, the pervasive personality which so filled everyone's mind that, whatever room he was in, he became at once its inevitable centre. "He appeared serene and calm; it hurt me to look at his quiet face. For the last two hours, while thinking of him, my mind had been thrown into such confusion that I could no longer recover the feelings the sight of him ordinarily gave me: it seemed to me that I must find him changed." But no: this stupendous event hung in the air, and yet Napoleon appeared exactly as usual. The evening passed as any other evening. Some officers came to dinner; "the time passed insignificantly"; and afterwards Napoleon shut himself into his study with some police officials.

The next morning Clari de Rémusat went as early as possible to see Josephine to discover if she had had any success with her husband. She had had none: "his policy", so he had told her, "demanded this *coup d'état* . . . he had to choose between this decisive action and a long course of conspiracies that would have to be punished daily. . . . In politics a death that would

bring tranquillity was not a crime at all : orders had been given, there was no going back on them."

"The whole day went by sadly ; I remember that Madame Bonaparte, who was devoted to trees and flowers, was taken up in the morning with having a cypress transplanted to a newly laid-out part of her garden. She herself threw some pellets of earth onto the tree-roots so as to be able to say she had planted it with her own hands." Clari de Rémusat watched these proceedings. "Mon Dieu, madame . . ." she exclaimed, "it is certainly the appropriate tree for such a day !"

While the two women dawdled about the grounds they saw at intervals only too suggestive figures driving up to the door, official figures who, as they climbed down from their carriage, were taken to Napoleon's study, where they remained closely shut up with him. Of Napoleon himself they saw little. So this dismal Monday dragged by.

"The next morning", writes Clari de Rémusat, "Madame Bonaparte said to me, 'It's no use ; the Duc d'Enghien arrives this evening. He will be taken to Vincennes and tried tonight. Murat has taken control of everything. He's odious about it. It's he who's driving Bonaparte on : he insists that people would mistake clemency for weakness . . . in short, Bonaparte has forbidden me to say anything more about it.'"

In due course the hour of dinner came round again, the moment when the la Malmaison household were all obliged to confront Napoleon. "At length, at dinner-time," writes Clari, "one was forced to compose one's countenance and go down. My own face was in confusion. Bonaparte was again playing chess : he had taken a liking for this game. As soon as he saw me he called me to come over to him, telling me to give him my advice. I was not in a condition to put four words together. He spoke to me with an air of gentleness and interest that completed my agitation. When dinner was served he had me put by him, and questioned me on a multitude of intimate things all to do with my family. He gave me the impression that he was determined to divert me and prevent me from thinking. The little Napoleon [Hortense's eldest boy] had been sent from Paris, he was put in the middle of the table, and his uncle seemed much amused at seeing the child

meddle with all the dishes and upset everything round him.

"After dinner he sat down on the floor, played with the child, and affected a gaiety that seemed to me forced. Madame Bonaparte, who was afraid he might still be irritated by what she had told him about me, [Napoleon had asked Josephine how her Lady-in-waiting was taking the affair], looked at me, gently smiling, as if to say, 'You see he's not so bad . . . we can reassure ourselves'. As for me . . . there were moments when I thought it was all a horrible dream. I probably looked scared, as suddenly Bonaparte, staring at me fixedly, said,

" 'Why haven't you any rouge? You are too pale.'

"I replied that I'd forgotten to put any on.

" 'What? . . . a woman forget her rouge!' and, breaking into a laugh, 'That would never happen to you, Josephine!' Then he added, 'Women have two things that suit them very well: rouge and tears.'

"These words disconcerted me more than ever. When General Bonaparte was in a gay mood he showed neither good taste nor propriety. Now he behaved in a way that savoured of garrison manners. He played about for some time with his wife with more freedom than decency, then he called me up to a table to be his opponent at chess. He didn't play at all well, as he wouldn't keep to the proper moves. I let him do what he liked; everyone was silent; then he began to sing under his breath. Then suddenly remembering some lines, he recited in a low voice, *Soyons amis, Cinna*, then the lines of Gusman in *Algire*:

*Et le mien, quand ton bras vient de m'assassiner.*¹

"I could not prevent myself raising my head to look at him. He smiled and went on. Really, at that moment I thought it

¹ This line is from *Algire*, Act V, Scene VII:

*Des dieux que nous servons connais la différence :
Les tiens t'ont commandé le meurtre et la vengeance ;
Et le mien, quand ton bras vient de m'assassiner,
M'ordonne de te plaindre et de te pardonner."*

["Mark the difference between the gods we worship :
Yours have commanded murder and vengeance ;
And mine, when your arm has given me a mortal wound,
Orders me to pity and to pardon you."]

possible he had deceived his wife and everyone, and that he was preparing a great scene of mercy. This idea . . . calmed me. . . .

" ' You like the lines ? ' demanded Bonaparte.

" My wish would have been to have replied ' Especially when they apply '.

" We went on with our game," she writes, " and his gaiety made me feel more and more confident. We were still playing when the sound of a carriage was heard : General Hulin was announced. The First Consul pushed the table aside violently, got up, and going into the gallery next door to the drawing-room he spent the rest of the evening with Murat, Hulin, and Savary.

" I went back to my room more tranquil ", writes Clari de Rémusat : but, while she slept, the last descendant of the House of Condé stood confronting a firing party.

The next morning she came down early and went to the drawing-room. There was only one person in the room, Savary, who commanded the *gendarmerie d'élite*. At the moment he was " excessively pale . . . face discomposed. When he spoke to me his lips were trembling, and yet he made only a few quite ordinary remarks."

Then Josephine came in. She sadly looked across at Madame de Rémusat, and went to sit down, saying to Savary, " Well, it's done then ? "

" Yes, Madame. . . . He died this morning, and, I must admit, with fine courage."

" I remained ", says Clari de Rémusat, " petrified."

Gradually, one person after another, having driven over to la Malmaison, came in at the door ; Eugène, hot with loyalty for his stepfather, and seeing in d'Enghien merely a conspirator : various Generals, talking noisily in self-justification. Josephine, " always a little afraid when people began to talk loudly and emphatically ", and feeling that the situation with its possible repercussions was getting beyond her grasp, walked about the room, remarking at intervals, " As for me, I'm a woman, and I vow it makes me feel I want to cry."

More and more people arrived : various ministers, also Louis and Hortense, the first " enwrapped in a silence that appeared to be disapproving ", Hortense " scared, not daring to feel anything,

and as if asking what she ought to think " : and ever and again, percolating through the confusion of voices would be heard, " As for me, I'm a woman, and I vow it makes me feel I want to cry."

The dread hour of dinner came round the third time. Before Clari de Rémusat went down, Josephine and Hortense both implored her to put the best face on the situation that she could, and Clari explains how everyone's mind at Court was reduced to almost a state of stupor by Napoleon's magical phrase, *My policy*, and that, " when he pronounced it, hardly anyone in the palace, least of all the women, would have dared to ask him what he meant ".

Now, before going into the *salon*, Josephine told Clari that during the course of the morning Napoleon had asked her what effect the news had had on her Lady-in-waiting, and, hearing how she had wept, he said, " She plays her woman's part : none of you understand anything about my affairs, but everything will settle down, and people will see that what I have done is by no means stupid."

During dinner Napoleon sat " plunged in profound thought ", and barely anyone spoke. Just as they were getting up, he suddenly gave utterance, saying " in a hard and rough voice, ' At least they'll see what we are capable of, and in future I hope they'll leave us alone.' He went on into the *salon* : he talked there a long time in a low voice with his wife, and looked at me ", writes Madame de Rémusat, " two or three times, but not angrily. I kept myself sadly apart, downcast, ill, and without either the wish or the power to say a word." The men stood in a half-circle ; the women sat round ; the silence only broken occasionally by some flat observation from one person or another. Then, getting up, Napoleon began to walk up and down. To and fro in the candlelight went that small but portentous figure with the neat silk-stockinged legs and markedly pointed shoes. Surrounded by this embarrassed, awkward silence, a desire for self-justification rose within him. Fontanes, the politician and poet, was among the guests, and, choosing him as his *vis-à-vis*, Napoleon began to throw remarks at him. During their duologue the Consul began to review monarchs of the past : some he debased, some he exalted ; Charlemagne was approved of ; Henry IV

child for lack of gravity ; Alexander received special patronage for having had the shrewdness to say he was descended from a god : it showed, said Napoleon, that he possessed " the real political instinct ". Louis XIV was blamed for being subjugated by the priests and by " *an old woman* ". From this, still walking to and fro from one corner of the room to another, he passed on to Louis XIV's generals, to military science, and to the element of chance in military tactics. In his talk, circulating round and round the plangent thought at the back of the mind of everyone in the room, he gradually began to draw nearer to his object. He called from their graves Caesar, Nero, and finally Frederick the Great, to point the argument that the truly great are above " certain customary feelings so important for the generality of mankind ". Finally, he urged his listeners to " anticipate time, enlarge your imagination . . . and you will see that these great personages whom you think violent, cruel, are really — what should I say ? — merely politicians."

This walking to and fro and talking went on for nearly an hour. Then, considering that he had sufficiently prepared the mind of the drawing-room, Napoleon, " suddenly interrupting the flow of his ideas, ordered Monsieur de Fontanes to read out extracts from Drake's¹ correspondence . . . which were all relative to the conspiracy ". When the reading was over : " There ", said Napoleon, " are the proofs which cannot be challenged." He then made several more observations of the same nature, gave a sudden ironic thrust at Louis XVIII away over in England — " One does not retake a kingdom merely with a letter dated from London, and signed Louis ! " — and finally ended with : " I have spilt blood, I had to ; I shall perhaps shed more, but without anger, and, quite simply, because blood-letting is a component of political medicine." Then he wound up with, " I am the statesman, I am the French Revolution : I repeat it and I shall maintain it."

" After this final declaration ", writes Madame de Rémusat, " Bonaparte dismissed us ; all withdrew without daring to communicate their own ideas ; and thus ended this most fatal day."

But, actually, it did not end so easily in Napoleon's mind ;

¹ Francis Drake, British Ambassador at Munich.

and afterwards, when at times he happened to see Hulin, he would remark, "His presence disturbs me, I hate the memory he calls up." For Hulin had presided at d'Enghien's trial.

3

Indignation at England for the part she had taken in the Cadoudal conspiracy; resentment at the Royalists' schemes against Napoleon's life; and fear of the possibility of Jacobin excesses: all these smoothed the path before the Consul that led to the imperial crown. The murder of the Duc d'Enghien, as showing that he would never consent to a recall of the royal family, reassured the Jacobin party as to his anti-Royalist tendencies, and further strengthened his position. In the May of 1804 he was proclaimed Emperor.

After the distribution in Paris this summer of the stars of the Legion of Honour there followed in August a distribution of crosses at Boulogne, where was the vast encampment of the army that had been destined to invade England.

A valley overlooking the Channel, one that formed a natural circle, had been chosen for this distribution. Napoleon had made immense preparations, wishing presumably to impress not only the French but the English, who, from their great wooden battle-ships that in the Channel confronted the French, would be able to witness what was to be a panoramic exhibition of the new Emperor in all his massed military splendour.

When his birthday, 15th August, dawned it was seen that on the highest part of the ground, and facing the sea, had been constructed a dais, at the back of which hung like a great tapestry two hundred flags which Napoleon had taken in battle. On the dais itself was placed what was supposed to be "the arm-chair of Dagobert". By it had been put Bayard's helmet, upside-down, and filled with the crosses and red ribbons that were to be distributed; and, finally, near the armchair was placed the shield of Francis I. On the twelve steps of the throne were to stand the twenty-four *Grands Officiers de l'Empire*. Behind the throne had been put up booths for the wives and relations of the soldiers and officials. In one of these, peering brightly through one of the

booth's little windows, was Laure Junot, engrossed in her favourite occupation of scrutinizing all the varied expressions that passed so rapidly over Napoleon's face : and yet responding with all her young alertness to the moving variety of the scene that lay spread out before her. "One has often spoken", she writes, "of the attachment, or, rather, of the idolatry that the Emperor inspired at this time. But in saying '*He was much loved!*' one comes to a stop, and the thoughts of the speaker finish the phrase in his memory. He thinks himself understood, and relies on one sentence, while it would require a great many . . . to give an idea of the feeling that animated the whole of France at that time, and above all, military France, for Napoleon. Let the English themselves remember this day of the 15th of August 1804 ! . . . It is to them I speak . . . whom I ask to acknowledge the effect these cries of affection must have had on them when the wind carried the sound to their ships. These cries came from the heart. Often one would see an old soldier, voice broken with tears, without the power at first to join his comrades and moving his hands to bless him whom he adored." Hortense, too, was present ; "England could be seen in the distance," she says, "and her splendid ships cruising off her coast seemed to form an impenetrable barrier. The impression caused by this sight gave birth to an idea of greatness hitherto unknown."

Laure Junot continued to watch the central figure of all this commotion backed by his tiers of flags which formed to her eyes "a worthy panache" as in the strong gusty wind they leapt and tugged, displaying their bullet-riddled folds. As for the appearance of Napoleon himself at this moment of apotheosis, "He was", writes Laure, "calm . . . and looking handsomer than I have ever seen him. His face had a remarkable expression of contentment . . . his glance was radiant", and, as it fell on "this crowd of young men who were old soldiers . . . seeing the ardour of these splendid troops, hearing these accents of love and devotion", it seemed to her he was thinking "With such men I can conquer the world !" For to the young French mind, fed on Napoleon's victories, no programme at the moment could seem more admirable.

The ceremony was long. . . . Five o'clock came. For the

past hour Napoleon had been constantly turning to Decrès, *le ministre de la marine*, and talking to him in a low voice. Finally, Decrès took a telescope and stared out to sea. Berthier, by his side, was gnawing his nails: Napoleon was growing more impatient every moment. It was evident that he and his staff were expecting something that did not appear. Then Decrès, still looking through the telescope, said something to Napoleon, who grabbed at the instrument so hurriedly that it slipped from his fingers and rolled down the steps of the throne. At that moment, out to sea a French flotilla of ten to twelve hundred craft was seen heading for Boulogne. These were the flat-bottomed boats of varying sizes that Napoleon had had built to float his army over to England. This naval display was to be the culminating point of the day, and was destined to impress the English sailors who, in their ships in the Channel — ships with casement windows, balconies, and verandas — could be seen with telescopes directed on the French boats.

As the flotilla, now the observed of all eyes, drew near, there suddenly burst forth "a very energetic oath" from Decrès. The reason for the naval minister's expletive was that, just as the first division of the flotilla had been drawing in for the soldiers on board to land, one of the boats had capsized, and the occupants had fallen into the water. One of them was drowned. "It was", says Laure Permon, "an unpleasant affair. In England they joked a great deal about our walnut-shells, as they called the *péniches* and even the *chaloupes canonnières*. The misadventure, happening in broad daylight before our enemies whose telescopes were all levelled at us, threw the Emperor into the most violent temper that I had seen him in for a long time." Descending from his throne, Napoleon began walking up and down while, at his side, Berthier and Decrès received his fulminations. Finally, when at six o'clock dinner was just about to be served in tents to several thousand men, rain began to pour down.

Hortense, who had come for a week's stay at the camp, tells us that one day at a review she noticed a grenadier with a silver urn fixed onto a velvet plastron that was slung round his neck. She was told that when a certain officer, La Tour d'Auvergne, had been killed in action Napoleon had had his heart embalmed, and

enclosed in a leaden box. Napoleon had it then placed in an urn, and ordered it should always be carried by the quartermaster of La Tour d'Auvergne's company of grenadiers, and that at the roll-call, when the name of La Tour d'Auvergne was pronounced, the carrier of his heart should answer, "Dead on the field of honour". This inconvenient object attended battles and roll-calls for eight or nine years. It was ultimately given, in 1817, by mistake to another branch of the family of La Tour d'Auvergne : in 1830 the correct branch instituted legal proceedings for its possession, which went on till 1842, when they won their case. It is now at Les Invalides.

4

With the coronation in view, in the December of 1804, every side-issue to do with the succession was brought to the fore. "It was", writes Hortense, "again a question of divorce : a council was called, and "the animosity shown at it by the Emperor's brothers was so great that . . . the Emperor thought he discerned a special virulence on the part of his family directed against the Empress. Therefore, instead of agreeing with their advice, he formed the project, not only of having her crowned, but also of having her consecrated with him."

As an alternative to divorce an idea took form in Napoleon's mind. He asked Josephine if she would be willing to accept as her own another woman's child, and "to feign a pregnancy cleverly enough to deceive everyone". Josephine agreed. Napoleon then took his doctor, Corvisart, into his confidence, and asked him if he would be ready to act his part in the hoax. "If I succeed", he said to Corvisart, "in securing the birth of a boy who will be my own son I should want you, as witness of the feigned accouchement of the Empress, to do everything necessary to give this ruse all the appearance of being genuine." Corvisart refused. After Napoleon's second marriage, and the birth of the King of Rome, the doctor related the incident to Madame de Rémusat.

On the 2nd of December 1804, with every ecclesiastical pomp, the coronation of Napoleon and Josephine was solemnised. It was followed two or three days later by the distribution by the new Emperor to the Army of the imperial standards topped with

eagles. This took place on the Champ de Mars. This was succeeded by a plethora of fêtes and parties. "These fêtes," writes Hortense, "where the Emperor's presence was indispensable, had a little diverted him from his habitual business. At least he seemed to give himself up more to society and to take a pleasure in it. He had become gallant, speaking more than usual to the ladies"; but, she explains, the reason for all this display of civility was in reality to cover his attentions to one person in particular: young Madame Duchâtel, who the summer before had become one of the *Dames du Palais*. At the Tuileries his obsession with this blue-eyed, aquiline-nosed beauty was known to everyone. For Josephine, it was the cause of many tears. "As for my mother," writes Hortense, "realizing quite well that someone was drawing her husband's tenderness away from herself, she became a prey to the saddest thoughts, and so unhappy that I could think of nothing to do to console her." Napoleon considered these tears made him ridiculous. "You must submit to all my whims . . ." he protested to his wife. "I have the right to reply to all your complaints by an eternal *moi*. I am a being apart. I accept conditions from no one." And another time he explained to her "so to speak, mathematically", that to him everything was permissible. "I am not a man like other men and the laws of morality or custom cannot be applied to me." And when, after this clear demonstration of the position, Josephine still protested, there would follow, writes Clari de Rémusat, who often witnessed these scenes, "violences that went to such lengths that I would not dare enter into particulars". Madame de Rémusat and Hortense were each made at intervals the unwilling and embarrassed go-betweens; one moment witnessing Josephine's bitter weepings in her bedroom; the next being interviewed by Napoleon, who was inclined to blame them if Josephine was not as passive as he considered she ought to be. They would urge Napoleon to be more considerate, and Josephine to be more dignified, for, in her anxiety to find out all that was actually happening, she would go so far as to confide in shopkeepers. Then, quite suddenly, it would all be over: Napoleon, "moved by what she had suffered, would substitute for injuries caresses which were as unmeasured as his violences had been, and as she

was sweet-natured and easily moved she again felt secure”.

It is to Hortense’s credit that, afraid as she always was of her stepfather, she yet confronted him over the Duchâtel affair. He at first took an angry tone : “ And you too, Madame, then you are against me ? ” But she quietly, though determinedly, held her ground.

“ ‘ You are right,’ said the Emperor, suddenly becoming gentler, ‘ I see that if in big matters I am big, in small ones I am small,’ and on this he walked off.”

He knew of Hortense’s sufferings at the hands of his brother, and would rate Louis for the impossible way he behaved to her. And, too, he admired Hortense’s efforts to make the best of this disastrous marriage. “ I assure you,” he remarked to her one day, “ you are not only one of the women, but one of the persons, for whom I have the most esteem.” Hortense might be afraid of Napoleon, but she had an uncritical admiration for his opinions, and to have won this eulogy from her stepfather, who rarely praised anyone, was extraordinarily sweet to her.

As for Josephine, her great irritant to Napoleon was her habit of getting into debt. These debts were always enormous and, as Napoleon gave scrupulous attention to all domestic and Court expenses himself, a constant annoyance. Every fashionable jeweller, milliner, and dressmaker in Paris took advantage of Josephine’s incapacity for saying No. Napoleon’s intention had been that none of these shop-people should come to her at the Tuileries, but actually they swarmed like cockroaches. Through what back doors, along what little passages, whispering, tripping, scurrying, basket-box on arm, trepidation and hope in their heart, would the Paris *vendeuses* not come ? “ The little inside rooms were full of them.” Full, too, of artists ready waiting with brush or crayon to catch an impression of the woman who was the centre of all this attention. Josephine, in consequence, would find herself in possession of a whole collection of portraits of herself which she would give away to anyone ; to relations, friends, chamber-women, or even to the dressmakers and milliners themselves.

If lacking in cerebral intelligence, Josephine possessed a practical one. She went to the furthest of her capabilities, and

there she had the sense to stop. The hours she spent at her dressing-table, the gauzy dresses, cachemire shawls, and butterfly fripperies that her women would daily hold out in front of her displayed in baskets for her to choose from, were all as much a necessary part of her virtuosity of living as is the wardrobe of a ballet dancer ; they all helped to build up the enchanting figure whose presence relieved the taut atmosphere engendered by Napoleon's own personality. It is he, and not her own capabilities, that has placed her in one of the row of niches for women famous in history ; but, once there, she knew how to adorn it. And if, putting aside this intuitive sense in the art of living, one has to admit she was to a great extent what is known as a silly woman, she was undeniably a kind one. No one dispossessed or despairing appealed to her in vain.

Once proclaimed Emperor, Napoleon began to bring his imperial Court to full bloom. Madame de Rémusat, having been some time in the country, returned to find herself caught up "in the whirlwind of our Court". At St. Cloud, where the Court was at the moment, everyone was excitedly trying to find out how everything had been done in the time of the Louis's. "The disease of etiquette seemed to have laid hold of all the inhabitants of the imperial Château of Saint-Cloud." Ponderous books of rules and regulations were dragged from the library shelves, and taken off to be studied. Madame Campan, who had been First Lady to Marie Antoinette, was sent for, and Madame de Rémusat filled a great copy-book with the precious syllables that fell from her lips. This was added by Napoleon to other note-books of further information gleaned from various sources. Applications, too, were being constantly made to Talleyrand's memory. Now that Napoleon was Emperor, it was obvious that he had to reconstruct Court life, but to read of his activities raises in the modern mind an inescapable comparison with those of a film director working at a period piece.

Madame de Rémusat's husband was appointed Grand Chamberlain, and had to keep the ordinary Chamberlains within bounds when they showed signs of overstepping them, and in consequence the de Rémusats were forced to lead a life of continual petty warfare over "a cordon, a slight difference in a costume, precedence

at a doorway, the *entrée* into such or such a *salon*". The true function of ceremony, as of all the arts, is to put the mind in touch with reality ; but for it to be effectual, it needs to be informed with the genuine spirit, and, above all, with dignity. The etiquette at Napoleon's Court all went with a rush : " carried out as if directed by the roll of a drum . . . and this kind of precipitation, the continual nervousness it gave rise to, joined to the slight knowledge of the formalities in a good half of the courtiers, gave his Court a more dejected than dignified appearance ". Madame de Rémusat gives us a picture of an imperial procession : the group of Court ladies, long train flung over arm so as not to hinder the general precipitancy, and perpetually urged to go faster by the chamberlains who, nearly treading on their heels, remorselessly repeated "*Allons, allons, mesdames, avancez donc. Allons, allons, mesdames, avancez donc*" (" They ought to call us the Palace *postilions*," protested Countess d'Arberg, scrambling along with the rest). All this urgency was on account of Napoleon, who was all the time trying to accelerate the pace from behind. Talleyrand, when he in his turn became Grand Chamberlain, had to walk immediately in front of him. Talleyrand, his feet injured from being dropped as a child, had difficulty in walking even slowly, and his efforts to hobble along quickly enough with the impatient Emperor pressing on immediately behind his back was a source of derisive amusement to the *aides-de-camp*.

The Court officials, with their silver-embroidered coats of violet, crimson, or amaranth, added to the variegated colour of the whole scene. Mixed with the Republican Court figures were now various members of the *ancien régime*, and Josephine was greatly gratified at having twelve *Dames du Palais*, among whom were " great ladies from all countries ; people much surprised at finding themselves brought together in this way ". Later, when, after Tilsit, Napoleon was at the summit of his power, the pressure of the members of the Faubourg St.-Germain at the gates of the Tuileries was so great that he would be seen to smile as his eye ran down a list of applicants who, at first, had jeered at the " royal displays " of the Corsican's Court. Now, the more exquisite the clothes worn at Court the more pleased was Napoleon, who, when he had not been able to afford it himself, had so condemned

luxury. When he was back at the palace after the coronation he had walked, smiling, among all the bejewelled and bedecked Court ladies telling them how well finery becomes a woman, and saying, "It is to me, ladies, that you owe it that you are so charming."

Cards in the evening were part of the palace ceremonial. No one might play for money : whist or loto was what the quartettes, dotted about at tables through several *salons*, occupied themselves with, or pretended to occupy themselves ; for, in reality, they often sat merely holding the cards while they gossiped. At one table would be seen Josephine playing whist with the chief people of the evening, two of her Ladies and a Chamberlain in attendance. Her attention must have been a good deal deflected from her game by all the women in the room having to come and curtsy to her in turn. She could not, either, but have been aware all the time that at another table in the same room sat the great Laetitia herself, who now bore with dubious grace the title of Madame Mère, bestowed on her by Napoleon. She had her own household, and Laure Junot had become one of her Ladies. At times Napoleon would neglect his mother, irritated by her parsimonious ways, by her refusal to play up to his royal charade ; while she, waiting grimly for the crash she foresaw might come any moment to her son's garish edifice, hoarded and saved for that moment. Exasperated, Napoleon would accost her with, "Well, Signora Laetitia, how do you like Court life ? You are bored, aren't you ? Look at your daughters, they seem born to it. I have given you a beautiful house, a beautiful property, and a million a year to enjoy it all, and you live like a bourgeois in the Rue Saint-Denis !" Another day he protested, "Madame Laetitia, I wish I could see you get through your million a year !" "I will spend it on condition that you give me two !" retorted Laetitia.

In the evenings at the Tuileries, a little knot of Chamberlains would at certain moments be seen advancing down the room, and behind them the small redoubtable figure in the dark-green and white uniform, with the indecisive step that was so strangely at variance with his character. On whatever part of the *salon* the little group of Emperor and Chamberlains was seen approaching,

silence would fall. Those on the favoured spot rose to their feet and remained rigid, waiting for the few brusque words that might or might not be shot out at them. "There was not a woman who was not pleased to see him remove himself from her vicinity", writes an onlooker; for Napoleon had by now developed the hurtful rudeness of the newly-arrived man who will not trouble to make himself agreeable except where it is worth while; but when he wished to please, his roughness would glide into a delightfulness certain to seduce, the famous Bonaparte smile would soften every feature, only in its turn to be succeeded, if he saw his hearer becoming too basking, too reassured, by sudden severity or hinted threat, so that his victim would be left finally in a state of bewildered nervosity. For this was the condition that Napoleon deliberately fostered; it ensured his subjects' thoughts being directed continuously to their Emperor, wondering in what they had offended, or in what, if they were not careful, they would soon offend. In this state they were at their most malleable.

As for the actual men and women who formed his Court, Napoleon did not approve of their having any interests outside his. Personal interests had to be metamorphosed into Court ambitions. He had to be served with complete devotion, but he only called it 'devotion', writes Clari de Rémusat, "when anyone surrendered his whole person, all his feelings and all his opinions", for the Emperor emphasized that "we must give up even the smallest of our old ways of living so as to have only one thought, that of his interests and his wishes. He would promise, in recompense, great elevation, much wealth, much satisfaction to one's pride."

A few days after the coronation, the de Rémusats happened to find themselves alone with Napoleon in one of the *salons* at the palace of St. Cloud. The de Rémusats, each in their own rôle, had now become egregious Court figures, but only a small part of their minds responded to Court life. Always reserving their judgment, they refused to have their intelligence distorted by the divagations of My Policy. Though for long now Napoleon, both in public and private, had cold-shouldered morality, he was still aware of that stern brow bent upon him from afar, and, when he

found a moment's leisure in his urgent life, would endeavour to justify himself in the eyes of those whose opinion he valued.

Of this particular moment, "I feel", writes Clari de Rémusat, "as if I still saw him in the embrasure of one of the windows in one of the *salons* at Saint Cloud, sitting astride a chair, chin propped on the back : Madame Bonaparte a few paces from him on a sofa : I sitting in front of him, and Monsieur de Rémusat standing behind my armchair". She tells us how for some time no one had spoken, and so exactly has she described the scene that we too seem clearly to see the little group posed motionless in the window of this vast and tranquil French drawing-room.

Ever since the murder of the Duc d'Enghien, Napoleon had shown in his attitude to Clari de Rémusat "a kind of sustained indulgence". It is evident he did not like to fall in the opinion of that exceptionally attractive, intelligent, and firm-principled young woman. So now he broke the silence with "*Eh bien*, you were displeased with me over the death of the Duc d'Enghien ?"

"That is true, Sire, and I still am . . ."

"But do you realize that he was waiting for me to be assassinated ?"

"That is possible, Sire, but all the same he was not in France."

"Ah ! it's not a bad thing from time to time to show that one is master in other countries."

"Say no more, Sire ; don't let us talk of it any more or you will make me weep."

"Ah ! tears ! women have no other resource ! . . . Isn't that so, Monsieur de Rémusat, that tears are women's strongest argument ?"

"Sire," replied my husband, "there are some tears one can't blame them for."

"Ah ! I see that you too take the affair seriously ? However, it's quite simple : you people, you have your memories, you have seen other times. Myself, I only date from the time when I began to count for something. What is a Duc d'Enghien to me ? One *émigré* who happens to be of more importance than another, that is all !"

Then he treated them to long dissertations on this central theme, but smilingly, with many neat twists and turns. It was a

moment of *laisser-aller*, of expansion, when he was deliberately putting forth all his powers to fascinate, to persuade ; but, just as the Rémusat were feeling completely at ease, suddenly, says Clari de Rémusat, "his face became grave, that severe look returned which always seemed to heighten his short stature, and he gave Monsieur de Rémusat some unimportant order or other with all the sharpness of a man who is absolute master".

"You see," her husband said to her afterwards when they were alone, "he was afraid that this unbosoming of himself to us might diminish something of the fear he always wants to inspire."

5

Though Napoleon had been once refused Louis' small son, he still intended getting possession of him ; and one morning a page from the Tuileries arrived at Louis' house saying the Emperor wished to see him and Hortense. When Louis and his wife entered his brother's room they were told that My Policy demanded that he should adopt their son, and that he intended to nominate him King of Italy. Louis categorically refused to give up the child. Then, stubborn, morose, and victorious he left the room. Hortense explains how scenes on this subject always had a repercussion on her mother through Napoleon being less nice to her. "By an habitual impatient tone he seemed to reproach her for the misfortune of not having a child." But if now he was often disagreeable, he still recognized the injustice of divorcing her. "How can I send away this good woman because I myself have become greater?" he asked. There was, too, another reason that made him hesitate. Josephine had had two children by her first husband. Was Napoleon to blame that she had not had any by him ? He decided to make certain. Caroline had as protégée a very lovely young woman, Elénore Deuvelle de la Plaigne, whose husband had deserted her. She lived in "a little pavilion" at Neuilly, close to Caroline and Murat's château. Napoleon visited her there, and a year later she gave birth to a son of whom Caroline took charge. Later, at a crucial moment in Napoleon's life, this child will be seen to appear.

Foiled of getting possession of his adored little Napoleon

Charles, Napoleon turned his face definitely towards his stepson, Eugène de Beauharnais. Eugène had the typical hearty-natured, swashbuckler good looks of a soldier of the Empire ; the type of face that perfectly lent itself to the opening-petal effect of the several superimposed military collars of the uniform of the time. Whatever he embarked on, success surrounded him. He was a young man like the morning sun ; everyone who came near him was warmed by his rays — an impression no doubt heightened by contrast with his stepfather who had always to be approached with caution. In 1805 the Emperor made him Vice-Chancellor of State, and the next year adopted him as his son, giving him his own name and designating him as Napoléon Eugène of France. The Senate was notified of this adoption. Napoleon had always found Eugène far more malleable than the members of his own family. That open-faced young soldier might occasionally let out a sigh in a private letter to Hortense, but outwardly he accepted without demur whatever orders or arrangements his stepfather imposed on him. Napoleon was the man who had plucked his family out of indigence and given them the foremost position in France, the man who, heaping benefits, supported them in their place in the solar system of which he was the luminary. Gratitude and policy, but, with his generous nature, chiefly gratitude, made Eugène fall in with whatever the Emperor devised. Devoted, too, as he was to his mother, he must always have had in mind the consideration that the stronger his own position the stronger hers.

As regards the question of the Italian crown, it was settled by Napoleon placing it on his own head : and Josephine had added to her title of Empress of the French that of Queen of Italy. Eugène was made Viceroy of that country.

The tussle over Napoleon adopting Louis' son was conclusively ended in 1807 by the child's death in Holland, of which country his father had been given the throne. The loss of the little Napoleon Charles is generally considered the reason why the Emperor, deprived of the nephew he had wished for his heir, finally decided on divorce. Certainly he made use of it himself as an excuse, but as a reason it was not valid. Against it is the fact that Louis already had a second son, and that, before the

definite repudiation of Josephine, Louis' wife had had yet another, the child who was ultimately to become Napoleon III. There were, therefore, two boys in the accepted line of heredity. Further, Napoleon had a third heir in Eugène, his now publicly adopted son, and an immensely popular figure in France.

When, at Schönbrunn in 1806, Napoleon had met Marie Walewska, who, in all the *éclat* of her Polish good looks, had enthusiastically offered herself to him, he would write *billets-doux* to her that might have come from any middle-aged philanderer ; there were allusions to the flying eagle (himself), loving glances, and close-pressed bouquets. He finally set her up in a little house close to the palace of Schönbrunn. Josephine, who knew of this liaison, was torn with distress, but she need not have been. Napoleon's feeling for her, even in its now tattered condition, was of more value. But a mutation had lately been taking place in his mind that was far more of a menace to her than any number of Marie Walewskas. With all the rush of events and experiences, responsibilities and decisions that had formed his life since the 13th *Vendémiaire* he had matured with intense rapidity, and now, in his late thirties, had arrived at the settled conclusions and attitudes of mind of a man of fifty ; a time when all the inherited tendencies, the concealed inclinations, the acquired trends of thought rise in force, driving every bolt of the nature home, fixing every rivet. The pliability of youth is over : the sensibility of later years not yet arrived. It is the time when worldly estimates are at their most potent, the voice of social prestige at its most alluring.

Round about 1805 to 1807 Napoleon had, at Schönbrunn and Tilsit, for the first time acted the part of guest to two of the oldest royal families in Europe. Dining with the Austrian Emperor, and the Russian Emperor, accepted within the intimacy of the royal preserves, he must, with his swift perspicacity, have been aware of a subtle change of social atmosphere, in the same way that, in passing from one part of a country to another, one is conscious of a fine difference of air. Inflections of voice, accepted attitudes of mind, outlook, and valuations would not have passed unnoticed by that discerning mentality. It is true that various

members of the old aristocracy were now to be found at Napoleon's own Court, but here, surrounding his royal hosts, the *ancien régime* atmosphere was more condensed. It must have been clearly driven in on him that here in the social sphere was something that, in spite of his own brand-new royal family at the Tuileries, he had not yet attained. We have already seen how intolerable to him was any sense of inferiority. For the last twelve years he had, apart from his activities as soldier and administrator, been mounting step by step this ladder of social prestige, and now, there, largely confronting him within this royal atmosphere, was yet another, the final step to achieve. Turn his own middle-class Corsican blood into royal blood he could not, but, in mixing the Bonaparte blood with that of a daughter of a royal house, he could father a half-royal child. Everything points to, and later incidents confirm, this ambition as being at least one of the most potent reasons for his final decision to repudiate Josephine. Before, he had hesitated, not only for her sake but for his own. But now, his snobbish period had definitely set in ; and Josephine was the sacrifice demanded.

6

When, as a young man, Napoleon's mind had been vulnerable to fine impressions, he had winced at the evil elements in mankind. "Men are so contemptible !" had been his cry. But as his own besetting passion for power gradually took an ever stronger hold on him, "his despotism began to develop with greater intensity than before", says Madame de Rémusat, who, her eye daily on him at the Tuileries or St. Cloud, scrutinized his symptoms as a doctor does those of a patient. The pinnacle he had now reached gave him no sense of security or, even, of satisfied happiness, and looking back at his younger days, he would at times remark that then "one sees life through a golden veil which makes everything look buoyant and dazzling ; as one goes on, gradually this veil densifies till it is nearly black".

Now, his thoughts turning to his conquests, to the new France he had brought into being, to his Court, to the institutions he had founded, the systems he had inaugurated, to those he had raised to positions of eminence and authority, he would, writes Clari de

Rémusat, be “devoured with uneasiness, ceaselessly worried with suspicions, enslaved by inner passions that constantly urged him on, and, growing distrustful . . . he feared even those he had himself created. If he saw the necessity for institutions, he would at the same time be struck by the rights they conferred on individuals. . . . Thus, when influenced by his suspicious attitude to people, he completely succumbed to it, and his one thought would be to isolate one person from another. He would weaken family ties, set himself to favour the interests of individuals to the prejudice of public interests.” Speaking of France generally, Madame de Rémusat shrewdly remarks that Napoleon had become “less occupied with our prosperity than with our greatness, which at bottom was nothing but his own”.

In all his activities, his own genius, so he would constantly explain to those around him, raised him above the laws of morality that were suitable for the ordinary man. According to this naïve philosophy he lived, whatever his actions, in a state of grace. His urgencies, as a younger man, had been often complex and contradictory, but now, in middle life, they became simplified. The aim of his every action was self-exaltation. Occasionally, in a smile, a gesture, a passing kindness, the earlier Napoleon would appear for a moment, but as the years went on, especially after the events that led up to his friendship with the Russian Emperor formed at Tilsit, the tones of his voice, so those around him noticed, were scarcely ever sincere, and any apparent kindness always turned out to be a move in self-interest. From the moment he started dressing in the morning — rudely pushing at his valets, abusing or striking them, flinging the scissors they were paring his nails with across the room, at the slightest provocation tearing his clothes, or even throwing them into the fire, taking deliberate pleasure in showing his contempt for everyone who was helping him — from these preliminary moments he passed on to the daily and hourly building up of France’s and his own prestige. It was Bourrienne’s duty, while Napoleon dressed, to read the daily papers aloud, but if he picked up a French instead of an English or German one, “*Passez, passez . . .*” Napoleon would cry out, “I know what’s in it, they only say what I want them to.”

For a very few people he still retained a real though quite unreliable affection : for Josephine, for Hortense, for Eugène, and for his sisters. For a short time his emotions might be genuinely harrowed by the sight of suffering, but only for a short time. Then the flame of self-interest would flare up, shrivelling all else.

Therefore, when after the Treaty of Tilsit he rejoined Josephine and Hortense, he wished for no more tears over the death of the little Napoleon Charles. Himself brimming with the sense of success — Austria and Prussia subdued, the Emperor of Russia his friend and ally — his mind was bristling with plans, with the thought that a marriage between himself and one of Alexander's sisters might materialize. Cheerful at the moment himself, he demanded that those around him should be cheerful too. His wife and her daughter had, he considered, wept enough. When he saw Hortense again for the first time after many months, "Ah ! there you are !" he exclaimed joyfully, as he came into her room at the palace at St. Cloud, but then, seeing tears in her eyes at the thought of what had happened since they last met, he said gravely, "*Allons*, stop this childishness, you have cried enough over your son, it is becoming ridiculous . . . be gay, give yourself up to the pleasures of your age and don't let me see any more tears."

All the same he exerted himself to cheer her, and one night after dinner walked off with her arm-in-arm to see the fair at St. Cloud. General Bertrand, with his air of a respectable, disillusioned butler, went with them. They arrived at the fair late. "Night was coming on, a multitude of people were hurrying to reach the exit. All this while we were examining the fair's marvels. The nomadic carriage drew our attention and . . . we amused ourselves by going to see it while General Bertrand paid for our entrance. The Emperor began chatting with the demonstrator on the utility of this machine, and embarrassed him very much by his incisive questions. On coming out, the waves of the crowd so pressed round us that the Emperor was nervous on my account, and hurried me into the first tent we came to without giving the attendant time to make us pay for our entrance. It was an exhibition of wax figures representing the meeting at

Tilsit. Round a big table had been placed the figures of the Emperor of Russia and the Emperor Napoleon, and, I don't know why, they'd added to them all those of the imperial family, no doubt already used for other occasions : and there, too, was the Sleeping Beauty resting in a corner. There was hardly anyone looking at these works of art. We were just on the point of going out when we noticed that General Bertrand had not come into the tent with us. The crowd had separated us, and as neither the Emperor nor I ever took any money with us we were both very much embarrassed. This was such a new and unusual adventure for me that I began to laugh idiotically, which seemed to make the Emperor still more uncomfortable, and the more ill at ease I saw he was, the more I wanted to laugh.

"We could only wait patiently till General Bertrand . . . was inspired enough to find us. To pass the time, we decided to pay a little more attention to the wax figures. I put questions to the guardian about each of these portraits. He assured me that they were all very good likenesses. He especially praised the one of the Queen of Holland. . . . I must, too, admit that he had chosen the prettiest to bear my name. All the same her coiffure was in such bad taste that I was rather ashamed of it. I risked advising the guardian to raise a row of pearls a little higher that were at present falling onto her eyes, and giving her a most undistinguished air. In fact, he set to work to re-do her coiffure under my direction, and with such gravity that the Emperor could not remain serious at seeing, what he called, such feminine coquetry on my part."

And she goes on to say how her and Napoleon's laughter affecting the showman, he too became hilarious. But very soon the Emperor began to grow impatient with the wax figures and the waiting and the *contre-temps* generally. "It was clear that if General Bertrand did not appear we should be forced to say who we were to get us out of our plight." However, in a few moments, Bertrand came running.

In Paris this autumn, Hortense says, "for the first time people were talking openly of divorce. Up to then there had not been a word from the Emperor on the subject."

It was now that he made to Hortense what, to her, was an astounding revelation. Her husband, at present in Holland, wished to have their second child sent to him there, but the boy was not strong, and the doctors told her the Dutch climate would be injurious. Hortense laid her difficulty before Napoleon, who, with his usual complete disregard of other people's feelings, retorted, "His father asks for him; he is not yet seven, I haven't the right to withhold him. He is the only son in the family: if he goes back to Holland he will die as the eldest one did, and the whole of France will compel me to a divorce." He went on to say that, in the event of the death of this little boy, "there would be complete anarchy", and that "if I have not had a divorce it is only my attachment for your mother that has stopped me up till now, for it is the wish of France". "This was clearly shown," he went on, without the least considering the effect the information would have on his stepdaughter, "This was clearly shown at the death of your son, who was believed to be mine too. You realize all the absurdity of such a supposition. *Eh bien!* you couldn't have rid the whole of Europe of the idea that the child was mine."

Hortense says that she was so affected by this information, which she now heard for the first time, that Napoleon hesitated a moment before he went on, "Your reputation is not any the worse for it, you are held in general esteem, but people believed it." He paused, and then remarked, "It was perhaps fortunate they did; in consequence, I looked on his death as a great misfortune."

Hortense's mind whirled. "I was so overcome that, as I stood there by the mantelpiece, I could not utter a word. I no longer heard what he said. This reflection, 'It was perhaps fortunate they did believe it', seemed to remove a veil from my eyes. It threw all my ideas into confusion but, above all, struck straight at my heart. . . . What! when he used to treat me as if I were his daughter, when it was so sweet and so natural for me to find in him the father I had lost, all these attentions, all these counsels, were from policy and not from affection! That which to a woman is the most precious possession of all, her reputation, far from being defended by its natural protector, had perhaps been

sacrificed for reasons of state. Then those proofs of an attachment as precious as they were honourable . . . accused me in the eyes of the world ! I had been thought culpable ! ”

In this lurid light Napoleon had projected, her relations, not only with him, but with everyone round her, took on a sinister aspect. “ Instead of friends, perhaps I had been surrounded with courtiers who in me flattered the mother of the successor to the Empire. I had been an object of calculation for everyone who was ambitious. Ah ! how painful it is to be undeceived to this extent ! ”

7

If Hortense had received a shock after Napoleon’s return from Tilsit, Josephine one day received a worse. At first all had gone well. There had before been a rumour that Napoleon was thinking of marrying the daughter of the King of Saxony, but now, on his return from Russia, he assured Josephine this was not so. The ever-observant Madame de Rémusat noticed that this time on coming back to his wife “ he again felt for her the kind of affection she genuinely inspired him with, and which often made him uncomfortable, leading as it did to his feeling embarrassed when he had particularly upset her ”.

But beneath this real pleasure at being with Josephine again there stirred more than ever the idea of divorce. His mind was in that divided condition when it aches for two incompatibles. Affection and ambition got, now the one, now the other, the upper hand. In talking with Josephine he would tentatively put forward the idea that “ perhaps ” one day he ought to marry someone else. On one occasion he added : “ If such a thing should happen, Josephine, then it would be you who would have to help me make such a sacrifice. I should count on your affection to save me from all the odium of this forced rupture. You would take the initiative, wouldn’t you ? . . . ”

Josephine refused to give him the opening he was trying to manœuvre. “ When you order me to leave the Tuileries,” she said, “ I will obey instantly, but the least you could do would be to order it in a positive manner. . . . If you divorce me, the whole of France will know it is you who are driving me out.”

But if Josephine managed to keep up an appearance of calm before Napoleon, alone in her room with Clari de Rémusat it was a very different matter. "Sometimes she would weep bitterly, at other moments cry out against the ingratitude of such an abandonment." "I will never give in to him . . . I shall certainly pose as his victim," and then, her thoughts no doubt on the Duc d'Enghien, she added, "but if I end by being too much in his way, who knows what he is capable of, whether he could resist the need for making away with me?"

On the face of it one would think that this fear had its origin in nothing but the self-torments of an overwrought mind which has endured to the point when the only safety seems to lie in envisaging the most extravagant disasters so as to have the assurance that it is at least prepared for them; but the level-headed Madame de Rémusat admits that Napoleon "had on various occasions acted in such a way and, above all, often spoken in such terms, that he gave some excuse for the exaggerations of profound unhappiness to harbour such suspicions". At the same time, she says, "I solemnly swear . . . I don't for one moment believe that he would ever have entertained the idea of freeing himself in this way". Now, faced with this tormented woman, all she could think of to say was, "Madame, you can be certain it is not in him to go to such lengths."

Fouché and Talleyrand each wished, if the divorce had to come, to be the one who brought it about. Talleyrand, however, did not wish it to come yet. "There cannot be anyone in this palace," he said to Clari de Rémusat, "who does not wish this woman to stay with Bonaparte. She is gentle, good-hearted, she knows the art of calming him. . . . On a thousand occasions she acts as a refuge for us. If we have a princess arriving here, you will see that the Emperor will break with the whole Court and we shall all be done for."

Meanwhile Caroline, who detested Josephine, was urging on Napoleon the suitability of his marrying a princess of royal birth, whipping up his vanity to bring him to the decisive point. Fouché, too, through his agents, was bringing about an artificial agitation in Paris to demand the divorce. "All at once people in the cafés began to discuss the necessity of an heir for the Emperor.

. . . This casual talk, inspired by Fouché, came back again through him, and through the other police, who reported everything, and the Emperor believed the public was much more occupied with the subject than it really was ", writes an onlooker. Fouché told Napoleon that Paris was enough heated on the subject to make it possible to arrange that groups of people should appear one day beneath the windows of the Tuileries demanding he should make a fresh marriage. Napoleon was, at first, taken with the idea, but Talleyrand, seeing that Fouché was getting ahead of him, pointed out to his master the danger of such a proceeding. "When," he warned Napoleon, "you have accustomed the populace to meddle with your affairs by such means, how can you tell they will not develop a taste for it, and what they will not send to ask you for in consequence? Furthermore, no one would be taken in by these mobs, and you will be accused of having summoned them yourself." Napoleon saw the force of these arguments and at once put a stop to Fouché's pranks. "From this moment they paid no more attention to the divorce in the cafés, and the national wish appeared to have cooled."

One evening in the spring of 1808 there was to be a theatrical performance at the Tuileries. One carriage after another drove into the courtyard and drew up at the door. Soon the great rooms were a slow-moving mass of satin-coated men and Grecian-draped women, expectantly waiting for Napoleon and Josephine. They waited: they went on waiting: they continued to wait. Then the word went round that they were to wait no longer. The performance was to begin without the Emperor and Empress.

In his own room Napoleon was lying on his bed in tears. Josephine, in all her gala-evening exquisiteness, had been sitting waiting for the hour of the party, when a messenger arrived telling her the Emperor was not feeling well. Going into his room, she found him flung on his bed suffering from violent abdominal pains. On seeing her come in at the door he burst into sobs and, pulling her down onto the bed, flung his arms round her, constantly repeating, "My poor Josephine, I can't possibly leave you. My poor Josephine, I can't possibly . . ." He was in the grip of an emotional crisis that he could not control.

Weeping and embracing his wife, he would only agree to her suggestion that he should undress and go to bed on the condition that she herself undressed then and there and kept him company. Through his tears Josephine heard him saying again and again, "They surround me, they make me miserable."

Who or what was it that surrounded him, that made him miserable? Certainly not the general voice of France, certainly not those engineered discussions in the Paris cafés. One must look elsewhere for this compulsion. When, as First Consul, his overtures to William Pitt had been rebuffed he took a personal revenge. He instructed both his Parisian journalists and the paid group that he kept in England to hunt out every detail of Pitt's life and to make full use of it, and very shortly "the French papers", writes Laure Junot, "and the English opposition papers resounded . . . with diatribes in the worst possible taste". Naturally there was a riposte on the part of the Tories. Venomous biographies of Napoleon began to appear in the English press. The first of these that came into Napoleon's hands drew from him "such a violent outburst" that, when a second one arrived, those around him, asked to read it aloud, dared not translate it as it was actually worded. In these volumes attacks were levelled not only against Napoleon but against his family; they were, says a contemporary, "delivered over to everything that an evil and often witty pen could pass on . . . to the public, surrounded with a framework, sometimes of invented facts, but sometimes of true ones. . . ." Naturally, all Europe fastened avidly onto these biographies. On top of them came a multitude of insulting diatribes "that the London pamphleteers rained by the million over France".

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the English proletariat in general looked on those of royal blood as beings set apart from ordinary humanity, as all but supernatural. On one occasion when George IV, then Regent, was going to Lady Hertford's house, one of her housemaids so thirsted to see him that she was allowed to hide in some lobby to gaze on him as he walked by. But when that massive figure came into view, the sense of being in the actual presence of royalty so overwhelmed her that she fainted away. With this as the accepted attitude in

England towards royalty, what easy targets, what Aunt Sallies for gutter-wit, for scurrilous lampoons and grotesque caricatures, that parvenu Corsican family provided ! The amours of Napoleon's three sisters, the bourgeois economies of his mother, Lucien's embezzlements when he was Commandant of Paris, the quarrel between Lucien and Napoleon, the lack of harmony between Louis and Hortense : all these must have been common knowledge. Napoleon's comparatively plebeian birth and his apparent inability to father an heir could not have escaped attention. Laure Junot says that " nothing can give a sufficient idea of Napoleon's fury when he read one of these pamphlets ". His nature, at once sensitive and violent, never lost any impression once received, and here, in these new wounds, those of his early life were made to throb afresh. Inevitably those boyhood humiliations at Brienne and l'École Militaire were revived. And not only those of Brienne and l'École Militaire. In his first years of power the refusal of the Faubourg Saint-Germain to have anything to do with him, the sarcasm and jokes at his expense issuing from those aristocratic drawing-rooms had been vitriol to his pride. And even when he had become Emperor certain families of the Faubourg still held out against him. Talleyrand tells how, on the evening of the battle of Austerlitz, a courier arrived in the courtyard of the house where Napoleon was staying, bringing the mail from Paris. Napoleon, after having the letters for the troops distributed, asked Talleyrand to read his own aloud to him. Talleyrand first unfolded those from the foreign ambassadors in Paris : " they interested him but little ". Then Talleyrand passed on to the police reports. Those received slightly more attention from the Emperor ; but what really roused him was a letter from Madame de Genlis in which she quoted some disagreeable observations made about him emanating from the Faubourg Saint-Germain : " she mentioned five or six families which never, so she added, would rally to the Emperor's government. Some rather sarcastic remarks which Madame de Genlis repeated threw Napoleon into a state of inconceivable fury," " Ah ! " he flung out, " they think themselves stronger than I. . . . Messieurs du Faubourg Saint-Germain, we will see ! we will see ! "

" And when," goes on Talleyrand, " did this '*we will see*'

come?" Only a few hours after his stupendous victory, when, in the room where he sat, there were every moment arriving "Austrian standards, Russian standards, messages from Archdukes, messages from the Emperor of Austria, prisoners bearing the names of all the greatest houses in the Empire". But no, it was all of no avail: once his sense of social inferiority was awakened, nothing else held any virtue or reality for him.

Those earlier injuries had been felt then; these later ones from the English press were felt now with all the savagery and force of his Corsican temperament. Who can say how much they increased the proneness to ambition in his Bonaparte blood, strengthened his craving to exalt himself to a position that would impress him on the imagination of Europe, not only, as he already was, politically and militarily supreme, but socially as well? What in that sense could more dazzle the world than that he should have a wife of royal blood, become son-in-law of one of Europe's oldest monarchies? If the clamorous voices he complained of to Josephine had originally come from without, they now came from within: it was his own desires that were precipitating him along the path that was to lead to the repudiation of Josephine; and this need he, consciously or unconsciously, enwrapped in the folds of My Policy, and presented it to the part of him that sincerely wept.

For the more closely we look into the circumstances the more patent it appears that in marrying again he was acting against, and not for, the interests of France. He had himself spoken, as regards the country's security, of "the evils of a minority". To marry now to provide an heir was, in the event of his own death within the next twenty years — which, considering the various dangers he ran, was more likely than not — to risk the probability of bringing about the actual position which he professed it was his earnest desire to avoid. And, in fact, it was this very minority of the King of Rome that, in the final crisis of Napoleon's life, assisted in his own undoing and the return of the Bourbons.

Among his three possible heirs — Louis' two boys, and Eugène de Beauharnais — Eugène stood out as Napoleon's perfect successor: a young man whose prestige so glistened, whose popularity in France was so widespread that four years later, when Napoleon

was setting off on his disastrous Russian campaign, he did not dare, as he had originally intended, to leave him as Regent of France in his absence, for fear of losing his own popularity : as " the idea of keeping Eugène caused too much joy there was no further question of it ", writes Hortense referring to that time. Napoleon having exercised his prerogative by adopting Eugène as a son, by designating him Napoleon Eugène of France, found that these bestowals bore too ripe fruits.

Eugène's suitability as Napoleon's successor was confirmed by the Russian Emperor, who was in a position to know every aspect of the situation. One day when he was talking to Hortense at la Malmaison after the *débâcle* of 1814 he remarked, so she writes, " that he could not imagine why the Emperor Napoleon had not adopted my brother ".

This nervous crisis on the part of the Emperor on the evening of the Tuileries party did not, for the moment, lead to anything definite ; and shortly after he set off for Bayonne to practise his political legerdemain on the Spanish royal family.

8

In the autumn of 1808 there took place the meeting of Napoleon and the Emperor Alexander at Erfurt. Here, as regards Napoleon, in this town crowded with ruling princes come to pay him homage, gratified vanity touched its apotheosis. " He loved pomp . . ." says Madame de Rémusat. " One cannot conceive all that passed through his head in reference to it." " The French Empire", he would say, " will become the mother-country of other sovereignties. My wish is that each one of the Kings of Europe shall be compelled to build himself a large palace in Paris, and that at the time of the coronation of the Emperor of the French these Kings shall come to Paris, and adorn with their presence, and salute with their homage, this imposing ceremony." The galaxy of crowned heads at Erfurt was the next best thing, and Napoleon had spared no effort to make his own glory as effulgent as possible. He, so subtle and *rusé* in his dealings with others, always displayed his conceit with the ingenuousness of a child. " I wish my journey to be brilliant ", he kept on saying

while the preparations for it were being made, "I wish to astonish Germany by my splendour."

Napoleon's object in meeting Alexander at Erfurt was to procure from him an assurance that in the event of further war with Austria, Russia would come to his assistance. In this Napoleon failed, but, not long before leaving Erfurt, he opened up a subject that for the moment lay even closer to his personal ambition than Russian military support. He wanted to discuss this particular subject with Talleyrand ; but his sense of inferiority by birth to this man who represented to him a veritable show-piece of the old aristocracy made him, when it actually came to the point, wince at the thought of exposing himself over a question that would prove a test-case as to what his Foreign Minister really thought of his social pretensions. The two men were talking late one night in Napoleon's bedroom. Napoleon had got into bed, but, late as it was, he kept Talleyrand from going by throwing at him one question after another. "His agitation was remarkable," writes Talleyrand ; "he asked questions without waiting for the answers ; he kept trying to get something out, something different to what he actually said ; at last he produced the great word, *divorce*."

But the question of his divorce had been canvassed by him at the Tuileries far too often for that alone to cause this disturbance in his mind. The crux was in what followed. Did Talleyrand think Alexander would consider Napoleon's marrying his sister ? Later, Talleyrand broached the subject to the Russian Emperor, who with shrewd tact said that he was not himself against the idea but that as regards marriage his sisters were under the control of his mother, and her consent would be necessary. With this qualified answer Napoleon had to be content.

9

During Napoleon's absence, first on the Spanish and then on the Austrian campaign, Josephine received from him a succession of letters, or, rather, notes : terse observations on the military situation, his health, the weather, then a quick word of affection, and his signature. . Occasionally, the affection would be a trifle

warmer. "Adieu, dear one," he wrote in June 1809, "you know my feelings for Josephine, they never change."

But, all the same, news that filtered through to her from Austria filled her with uneasiness. She heard that Marie Walewska had joined him again at Schönbrunn: more ominous still, she was going to have a child by him. However, to counter this ill news, Eugène, during this Austrian campaign, had so come to the fore that, says Hortense, "My brother's successes had caused much talk in the army. Eugène was looked upon as the only successor who would be agreeable to the Emperor." She goes on to mention the attempt of the young university students who tried to assassinate Napoleon in Schönbrunn palace, and of how the French Generals, when discussing who, if the attempt had succeeded, they would have felt could have followed Napoleon, had all unanimously named Eugène. "The opinion of France", writes Hortense, "was in agreement with that of the army. The rumour, which even reached the Emperor, displeased him. It re-awoke all his ideas of a divorce."

Her belief was that Fouché, too, eager for the divorce, and in consequence afraid of her brother's popularity, would stand in Eugène's way, and "would not have let pass the opportunity of making known to the Emperor a desire so dominant in France", the desire, that is, for him definitely to name Eugène as his successor. In a word, Napoleon was not going to be done out of his divorce. The perfect heir might be there to hand, the country eager to acclaim him, but, rather than lose the *éclat* of marrying a royal princess, forgoing the double pride of showing the world he could father a child and of being the parent of a semi-royal offspring, he would run the risk of all the evils of a minority.

This autumn another letter arrived from him for Josephine:

"*Munich.* — Dear one, I am starting in an hour's time. I shall be arriving at Fontainebleau the 26th to the 27th, you can repair there with some Ladies. — NAPOLEON."

Josephine had gone to la Malmaison in August, her mind continually fretted with the thought of her Polish rival and the coming baby; with the sickening fear that now her own repudiation would surely come. She was weighed down, says Hortense, with "inexpressible heaviness of heart": in fact, her sense of

apprehension about the whole situation was so overwhelming that when she had to set off to meet Napoleon on his arrival her strength of will failed her. It was not till nine hours after he had reached Fontainebleau himself that she appeared. Napoleon received her "moderately well", but, during the days that followed, with the attempt at self-justification of the egoist who is about to injure his victim, he took up an attitude of angered hostility. "No more tenderness, no more consideration for my mother. . . . He became unjust, tormenting," wrote Hortense : for this time his mind was completely made up ; Josephine was to be given her *congé*. She herself realized it without a doubt ; the communication from Napoleon's room to hers which she found he had had blocked up : his harshness : his no longer asking her to come in his calash when he went for his drives : the rumour that now, at Fontainebleau, he had taken a new mistress, who was in his sister Pauline's service — all only too clearly warned Josephine of what was coming.

From Hortense we turn to the Court prefect, Bausset, for the final scene.

In November, while he was on duty at the Tuileries, he says he had noticed for several days Napoleon's constrained silence at dinner, and he had noticed, too, something indefinably altered in Josephine's expression. At these rigid meals Napoleon would occasionally break the silence by putting a brief question to Bausset. But when Bausset answered the Emperor did not listen. On a certain Thursday, the 30th of November, dinner was even more silent than usual. "Josephine wore a large white hat, tied under her chin, which partly hid her face. All the same I thought I could see she had been shedding tears, and that it was still only with difficulty she held them back. She looked the image of sadness and despair. The most profound silence reigned during dinner." "One heard nothing", writes the valet, Constant, who, too, was in the room, "but the reiterative sound of plates being brought, and taken away, drearily varied by the monotonous voice of the *officiers de bouche*, and by the tinkling noise made by the Emperor mechanically tapping his knife against the side of his glass." "Except for the sake of appearance," goes on Bausset, "they barely touched the dishes offered them. The only words

spoken were when Napoleon asked me ' *What time is it ?* ' Without listening to the answer, he got up from the table. Josephine followed slowly, her handkerchief to her mouth as if to check her sobs. Coffee was brought in, and, as usual, the page offered the tray to the Empress so that she should do the pouring-out, but the Emperor took it himself, poured the coffee into his cup, and let the sugar dissolve, gazing all the time at the Empress, who remained standing as if stupefied : he drank, and then gave everything back to the page. Then he made a sign that he wished to be left alone, and shut the drawing-room door behind him."

Bausset and Constant both went back to the dining-room. Bausset sat down in an armchair near the door, and tells us how he was nonchalantly watching the servants going to and fro clearing away the dinner when, from the next room, he heard piercing cries from Josephine. "The Usher of the room," writes Bausset, "thinking she was ill, was on the point of opening the door : I stopped him, saying that the Emperor would call for help if he thought it desirable. I was standing up close to the door when Napoleon opened it himself and, seeing me, said hurriedly : 'Come in, Bausset, and shut the door.'"

Throwing his hat on the floor so as to leave his arms at liberty, "I went", says Bausset, "into the *salon*, and saw the Empress stretched out on the carpet, giving vent to heart-rending moans and cries. . . .

" 'Are you strong enough,' Napoleon asked, 'to lift up Josephine and carry her to her room by the inside staircase ?'

"I obeyed and lifted up this princess who I thought was overcome by an attack of nerves. With Napoleon's help I took her up in my arms, and he, taking a candlestick from the table, lit my way, and opened the door of the *salon* that led by a dark passage to the little staircase he'd spoken of. Arrived at the first step of these stairs I remarked to Napoleon that they were too narrow for it to be possible to go down without fear of falling. . . . He at once called the *gardien du portefeuille* who, day and night, was posted at one of the doors of his study. . . . Napoleon gave him the candlestick — which we had little need of as the passages were already lit. He ordered the keeper to go on in front, and himself held Josephine's legs so as to help me go down more cautiously.

But I foresaw the moment when, my sword getting in my way, we should all of us fall down.

"When, in the upstairs *salon*, I had lifted up the Empress she had stopped moaning ; I thought she had fainted, but at one moment I got entangled with my sword in the middle of the little staircase. . . . I was obliged to hold her tighter to avoid a fall. . . . I was holding her in my arms, which were round her body, the back pressing against my chest, and her head leaning on my right shoulder. When she felt the efforts I was making to prevent myself from falling she said in a low voice, '*You're holding me too tightly.*' I realized then that I had nothing to fear for her health, and that she had not lost consciousness. Happily we got down without accident, and deposited this precious burden on an ottoman in her bedroom. The Emperor at once went over to the bell-ropes and brought the Empress's women."

As soon as they had come, Napoleon went into a little room next door. Bausset followed him. He says that, so far entirely occupied with Josephine, he had not noticed the condition Napoleon was in, but now as he looked at him he saw that he was in an extraordinary state of agitation. Tears were in his eyes ; he tried to speak but could only manage short breathless sentences. "The interests of France and of my dynasty have done violence to my heart," he brought out. A long pause while he tried to get his breath, and then, "Divorce has become my harsh duty" : another pause, and "I am so much the more afflicted by the scene Josephine has just made" : yet another pause, and then further broken sentences on his sympathy with Josephine and his surprise that she should have taken it so hardly.

"He must", says Bausset, "have been really beside himself to enter into such details with me, I whose position put me quite outside his counsels and confidences." Finally Bausset went back to the dining-room, picked his hat up off the carpet, and sat down to ruminate, so he tells us, on the slight relation between high position and happiness.

Napoleon's first concern after leaving Josephine in her bedroom was to send for Hortense, whom Bausset now saw passing through the dining-room on her way to her mother. As she listened to Josephine's sad talk, and tried to put courage into her

to face what had to be, she felt her spleen rise. The Beauharnais and the Bonaparte families, so long interlaced, were now to be disentangled, to draw apart, to become again separate groups? Very well: let it be done with dignity, and let the Beauharnais group show a suitable sense of self-respect. A page came from Napoleon to ask her to go to him. The interview began with Hortense and her stepfather both trying to be grand. Napoleon put forward his usual parrot-cry of France's wish for the divorce; "she loudly demands it": though Hortense might well have asked why, if the demand were so loud, it was necessary to keep drawing attention to it. He ended by saying "in a sharp manner", "Nothing will make me go back on it, neither tears nor entreaties."

Hortense, in her turn, managed in a "cold and calm" voice to make, in an impossible situation, a most admirable little speech, placing the wish for divorce where she knew it really resided, in Napoleon's own desires. "You are the master to do what you please, *Sire*. No one will oppose you. As your happiness requires it, that is enough. . . . Do not be surprised at my mother's tears. You would surely be more surprised if, after a union of fifteen years, she did not shed them. But I am convinced she will submit, and we will all go away taking the memory of your kindnesses with us." As she spoke she had noticed Napoleon's face changing, and, as she finished, he burst into tears, and "in a voice broken with sobs, he cried, 'What! you are all going to leave me, you are going to desert me? Then you don't care for me any more?'"

At this, Hortense, too, broke down. "My pride left me. I cried too, and thought only of how to console him."

Napoleon's wish was that Josephine should remain near him, and that Hortense, now practically separated from the impossible Louis, should not absent herself either.

"Therefore don't talk any more of leaving me," Napoleon wound up after a long explanatory harangue, which Hortense countered with, "*Sire*, I owe myself to my mother. She will have need of me. We cannot live near you any more. It is a sacrifice that has to be made: we will make it."

A daily contention now went on over this question, and in the

midst of it Hortense drove off to meet Eugène — whom Napoleon had sent for — so that she could warn him of the state of affairs before he got to Paris. His carriage and hers met at Nemours. Eugène clambered down from his, and got into Hortense's. "After we had embraced, shedding tears of joy at seeing each other again," writes Hortense, "he said, 'Is what brings us together good or bad?' I replied 'Bad', and he guessed the rest."

At one stroke the Beauharnais family had all to readjust their futures. Up till now it had been a foregone conclusion that either one of Hortense's boys, or else Eugène, would succeed Napoleon. All that was now swept aside. When Eugène and Hortense got back to the Tuileries, there was a final tussle between Napoleon and the Beauharnais trio as to whether Josephine should entirely separate herself from him and his Court. The sensibilities of all four were by now so worked on by the sense of coming separation that not one of them could speak without tears: at one moment Napoleon even seemed as if he wanted to put a stop to the divorce, but Hortense and Eugène pointed out that "it was too late; that what was in his mind being known to us, the Empress could not live happily with him". Eugène demanded that Napoleon should name some place where "far from the Court and intrigues we can help our mother to support her grief".

"Eugène," said Napoleon, "if I have been able to be useful to you in your life, if I have stood in the place of your father, do not abandon me. I need you. Your sister cannot leave me. She owes it to her children, my own nephews. Your mother does not wish it. You will make me wretched with all your exaggerated ideas."

Finally, he got his way. Josephine, now that her dread hour was actually upon her, behaved with unexpected dignity. "It was", says Hortense, "for us she suffered; as for herself, her mind was already made up, and she ceaselessly reminded herself of everything that could help to fortify her: the certainty of remaining the friend of the man whom she cherished, of living in the same country as he . . . and, above all, of contributing on her own part to the destinies of France and of the Emperor."

The 15th December was fixed as the actual day of divorce. At nine o'clock in the morning, Napoleon and Josephine were

already waiting in the room known as Napoleon's "great study", when the whole Bonaparte family trooped in to witness the repudiation of this woman whom for fifteen years they had tried to push out of their family. Napoleon picked up a paper, and started to read it out "in a loud, assured voice"; but at the words "She has embellished my life for fifteen years" there came the inevitable breakdown. When it was all over Napoleon embraced Josephine, then took her hand, and led her from the room. It was at this moment that, for the first time, her courage failed her. Napoleon, as usual, applied to Hortense to steady the situation. She, always noted for finding the reassuring attitude, the helpful phrase, reminded her mother how the last queen in the Tuileries had left, not for a charming country house but for the guillotine.

Constant, that night as usual, was in Napoleon's bedroom helping him to undress.¹ "That evening," writes the valet, "after he had got into bed, and while I was waiting for his final orders, suddenly the door opened and I saw the Empress come in, her hair disordered, her face upset. Her appearance frightened me. Josephine . . . came tottering up to the Emperor's bed. When quite close she stopped, and wept laceratingly. She fell onto the bed, put her arms round his Majesty's neck, and lavished on him the most touching caresses. My emotion cannot be described. The Emperor too began to cry; he raised himself to a sitting position, and pressed Josephine to his breast, saying, '*Allons! ma bonne Joséphine*, be more reasonable. *Allons! courage, courage*, I will always be your friend.'

"Suffocated by her sobs, the Empress could not answer. There followed a silent scene lasting several minutes while their tears and their sobs mingled. . . . At last his Majesty, emerging from the overwhelmed state he was in, as if coming out of a dream, saw I was there, and said in a voice contorted by his tears, 'Go away, Constant.' I obeyed, and went into the room next door. An hour afterwards, I saw Josephine go by on her way back, still very sad, still in tears; she made me a kind gesture as she went by. Then I returned to the bedroom to take away

¹ Constant gives this date as December the 16th, but as Josephine was that night at la Malmaison, and Napoleon at the Trianon, he must have been referring to the night of the 15th.

the candlesticks, as was my custom every evening. The Emperor was silent as death, and so sunk down in his bed that it was impossible to see his face."

The next day at two o'clock the royal carriage, familiarly known at Court as *The Opal*, drove up to the door of the Tuileries, and Josephine and Hortense got in to drive down to *la Malmaison*. The carriage blinds were drawn down: and the two women drove forward through a downpour of rain. Relentlessly the raindrops drummed on the roof, made rivulets down the windows, danced and sluiced in the gutters on either side. Neither mother nor daughter spoke. . . . They arrived, and went into the house of which every room spoke of Napoleon.

"If he is happy," said Josephine to Hortense, and her tears ran, "I shall not regret it."

A commonplace observation enough, but in this case of real interest because it happened to be sincere.

Two hours after Josephine had driven from the Tuileries Napoleon too drove away; to the *Trianon*, where he spent a week in, for him, most unusual idleness. He had always prided himself on keeping the decisions of his mind from being interfered with by the emotions of his heart. This parting was the crucial test of that system: he won through, but at a cost to himself perhaps beyond what he had reckoned. The day after he had gone to the *Trianon* he went over to *la Malmaison*. Josephine appeared. "He took her hand", writes Hortense, "with affection, and walked for a long time near the *château* talking with her." But he did not feel satisfied that Josephine was reacting to the situation exactly according to arrangement, and when back at the Tuileries that evening he sat down and wrote her a note that was like a faint, sad echo of his early letters from Italy.

"My dear one, I found you today less resolute than you ought to be. You have shown courage, you must find more still to sustain you, you must not let yourself give way to a fatal melancholy; you must be contented and, above all, take care of your health which is so precious to me. If you are attached to me and if you love me you must show strength of mind and make yourself happy. You cannot doubt my constant and tender affection, and you would understand very wrongly all the feeling I have for

you if you imagine I can be happy and content unless you are feeling calm.

“Adieu, my dear one, sleep well ; dream that I wish it.”

Every day after this a page arrived at la Malmaison bearing a letter from Napoleon. He told her of his stag-hunting round Versailles ; that he was sending her some game ; that he wished to know how she was and what she had been doing : and there was a little moaning over his own state of health. He had devised a plan that she and Hortense should come and see him at the Trianon on Christmas Day. They agreed to this. They arrived as arranged, and stayed to dinner. But this Christmas reunion was a dismal failure. Josephine and Napoleon sat opposite each other ; Hortense and Caroline on either side. Not a word was spoken by anyone. It seemed odd to Hortense as she sat watching the pages handing the dishes, and the Palace prefect carrying out his usual duties, that this little dinner scene, as she had known it a hundred times, should be taking place exactly the same as usual, as if the decisive rent in their lives had never taken place. . . . She noticed that her mother could not eat a mouthful, and was so wrought that she was all but on the point of fainting, while at intervals Napoleon would take out his handkerchief and wipe his eyes. Immediately after dinner Josephine and Hortense left.

The day came when Napoleon had to return to Paris. “I felt very much bored at being back at the Tuileries again,” he wrote to Josephine ; “this great palace seemed empty, and I felt lonely.”

Josephine's Paris friends did not desert her. A constant stream of the faithful, “from the smallest tradesman up to ministers and marshals”, came and went ; but all the time her thoughts revolved sadly round the violent, the affectionate, the egoistic, the inordinate, unpredictable figure in Paris who was at this moment pursuing My Policy by arranging for a second and far more flamboyant marriage.

THE KING OF ROME ARRIVES

IN the March of 1810 there pushed along the roads from Austria to France one of those strung-out processions of ornate coaches and galloping horses that were at that time royalty's method of progress from one country to another. Within the roomy depths of the largest, most elaborately decorated of these coaches sat the central figure and cause of all this hustle, Marie Louise, eldest daughter of the Emperor of Austria, her spring-time face blurred at the moment by exhaustion and constant crying. Behind her lay the known ; the known that, though much of it had been far from happy, lay in her heart now as something infinitely dear : before her stretched the unknown, guessed at, even at its best, as a wretchedness that must be endured to please her father and for the sake of her country.

There are numerous portraits of Marie Louise ; many in which the fact that she was that very important person, the Empress of the French, was obviously paramount in the artist's mind ; many in which the painter has shamelessly converted her all but plain face into that of a loll-eyed beauty : but there is one early portrait which convinces as having caught the essential Marie Louise, that ingenuous and shy, earnest and idealistic girl of eighteen who was to fill the place vacated by Josephine. The general impression the face gives in this particular portrait is that of a well-bred, much-cloistered young woman who is self-assured about nothing except her social position : it is imprinted with a timidity that asks for guidance, an obvious readiness to accept this guidance from any authoritative source. And herein lay what was perhaps the keynote of her whole outlook on life ; it was a necessity for her that someone should always be at hand to tell her what she ought to do, to point out her duty, and to motivate her thoughts. Her whole upbringing had clamped her mind into this attitude, and she possessed no native originality to initiate her into any other.



MARIE LOUISE
From a statue by Canova





In the Austrian Court, first under her mother, then under a stepmother, she had grown up as straitly and primly as a sheathed crocus, and in her early letters is evident both the artless warmth of her nature and the barrenness of her life, a life so constricted that the least pleasure set her aquiver. "Papa is here," she writes when she is eight, "and I'm so joyous today I don't know where I am." Another day she picks some veronica at Achan with which to make tea, and her letter is lit by the event: "I have never spent such a happy day in my life". "I cannot express my joy", she writes when her grandmother sends her a big basket of fruit asking her to act as her ambassadress in giving it to her mother. On her twelfth birthday, about to make her first communion, she writes to a little friend that the Countess Colloredo "has told me that she will take me up to my mother's room today so that I can ask her pardon and blessing, which will be a great joy to me, it would be still greater if she would kiss me, but I dare not flatter myself that I shall obtain this favour".

Facts that it was considered inadvisable she should know were expunged from her lesson-books by her governess snipping out the offending words with a pair of scissors. Marie Louise was in no wise disconcerted when she came across these lacunae in her books, for this constricted method of learning tallied with her constricted upbringing in general; the aspect that was specially emphasized being that she was before everything else a daughter of the royal house of Austria, and, as such, a mere pawn of her father. That long-limbed man who was the apex of her admiration, her interests, and her affections, Francis II, the last elective Holy Roman Emperor, and the first hereditary Emperor (as Francis I) of Austria, is an evasive character. The minds of the two most brilliant men with whom he came in contact, Napoleon and Metternich, mirror back each a figure which is the antithesis of the other. To Napoleon he was "a blockhead occupied only with botany and gardening": but was this merely the brilliant parvenu's contempt for the stereotyped royalty, gilded only by position? Metternich speaks of his sovereign's "immovable strength of character" and "great qualities", and stresses that though he may often have appeared to be playing a subordinate part, in reality it was "exactly at those times when the

extraordinary results were due only to his courage, his determination". But were they? Were they not rather due to the energy, the determination of Metternich who was impelling him from behind? Were not Metternich's encomiums really gratitude for the Emperor's docility in carrying out the policy of his towering minister? The devotion of his family puts Francis in a pleasant light; but was this devotion induced by the consideration that they were all, literally, at his disposal; by an unconscious desire to keep in with the family giver of all good things? He passed for a religious man; but certain of his actions were inhumanly cold. To Marie Louise he was everything that he should be; the perfect father of his family, the domestic monarch of his people: she had not the critical intelligence to realize what he was not. Throughout her life she managed, though certainly at times with difficulty, to see him only through a blur of filial affection. She was the eldest of his thirteen children by his second wife, Maria Theresa, daughter of Ferdinand, King of the Two Sicilies, and sister to Marie Antoinette. When Marie Louise was thirteen there arrived the first of the series of upheavals in her life of which Napoleon was to be the cause. He had for years been known to her as the loathed enemy of her country: he had been the Aunt Sally of early days in the royal nursery, when she and the others would dig pins into an ugly toy soldier that they had dubbed Bonaparte. But in the autumn of 1805 she and her family had literally to flee before the detested fellow. Now she learnt what it was to endure exhausting drives that seemed to go on and on interminably; to have meals in wretched inns; and worst of all, to live in constant dread that her father might be wounded in fighting the national enemy.

In December 1805 Austria experienced the disaster of Austerlitz. This was followed by a death in the royal family: that of Marie Louise's mother. About a year later her father, that most uxorious of husbands, married again; this time the Archduchess Marie d'Este. In 1809 the Austrians invaded Bavaria; and Napoleon's riposte was to defeat the Austrians at Abensburg and Eckmühl, and to enter Vienna for the second time. Again the Austrian family fled to Hungary. "I assure you I am already turned to stone," Marie Louise wrote to her former governess, "so much

have I already suffered by the war . . . it seems to me our family is not made for happy days, and all the same Papa does so deserve them ” ; and then, with the optimism of seventeen she waves the old philosophical tag passed on to her by her stepmother : “ as Mama says, life is so short in comparison to eternity that it is easy to put up with its reverses ”.

After Wagram and the armistice that followed, Marie Louise writes that she only hopes the place finally decided on to discuss peace terms will be a long way from Erlau, so that she may feel secure from “ that person ” coming to pay her and her stepmother a visit, as “ that would be a torture worse than any martyrdom, and I don’t know but that it might enter his head ”. And now, less than a year later, she is being relentlessly swept along in this lumbering coach to become the wife of the man whom, only a few months before, she had been in the position of being able to refer to as “ that person ”.

It was Napoleon himself who, failing to acquire a sister of the Russian Emperor, had suggested a marriage with Marie Louise, approaching the idea circuitously through Princess Metternich at a time when she was left in Paris without her husband. “ At a masked ball ”, writes Metternich, “ at Cambacérès ’, to which my wife had received a very pressing invitation, a mask, in whom she immediately recognized Napoleon, took hold of her arm, and led her into a private room at the end of the suite of apartments. After some jokes of no importance, Napoleon asked her whether she thought that the Archduchess Marie Louise would accept his hand, and whether the Emperor, her father, would agree to this alliance. My wife, very much surprised by this question, assured him that it was impossible for her to answer it.” Napoleon fell back on a test question. Supposing she were in the place of the Archduchess, would she marry him ? No, she would refuse him.

“ You are cruel,” protested Napoleon ; “ write to your husband, and ask him what he thinks of the matter.”

Such had been the original impulsion that led to the formal offer. Francis had accepted it without the least compunction, only making the stipulation that Marie Louise must herself agree : an entirely artificial stipulation, for how could she, abjectly devoted to him as she was, placing, as he perfectly well knew, her

sense of duty, her wish to do what he thought right before everything else — how could she possibly refuse? It was the most shameless taking advantage of a child's fine nature. But in this laying of her on the sacrificial altar Francis foresaw at least temporary peace and rehabilitation for his country, and continued popularity for himself; and he did not waver. As for Marie Louise, "It is not for me to judge", she had written when, several years earlier, she had been told how in Egypt Napoleon, to conciliate the Moors, had professed himself a Mussulman; and 'It is not for me to judge' remained her attitude to all events. Meekly, her pouring tears her only protest, and without a trace of rancour, she had agreed to the transaction. Invisibly shackled by the desires of Napoleon, the wishes of her father, the pressure of circumstances, she had consented to this complete yielding up of all personal volition, and was now passing, an uncomplaining victim who asked no questions, from Austria to France. From her own point of view one good only arose from it: by being married to Napoleon she was at least prevented from being married, as had been threatened, to her stepmother's brother, the Duke of Modena, a man of such brutality that he was known as the Butcher.

But this negative good could not have been much consolation to her as she sat now listening to the repetitive galloping hoofs of the eight white horses that were bearing her every moment further from Austria, further from her family, from the palace of Schönbrunn, from that other palace, the Hofburg, that stood in Vienna itself — Vienna with its shops and its valse-playing bands enmeshing her mind in one does not know what little-girl-innocencies of romance and laughter — that place which she so adored that in her last flight to Hungary she had even managed to get hold of, and had taken with her, "a little piece of the pavement of that dear town". Now she would never live there again; perhaps never even see it again.

Letters from Napoleon had come for her before she left Vienna. Considering they were a type of letter all but impossible to write he circumvented the difficulties remarkably well, transferring all the enthusiasm he felt for Marie Louise's royal birth onto her person: for, once he had realized the Russian

marriage was not going to materialize, he had turned with avidity to this sprig of the Austrian royal house. His letters to her were graceful and reassuring letters ; warm but respectful ; and the unavoidable hypocrisy of some of his phrases had to be endured by Marie Louise as best she could. " Can we flatter ourselves . . . " Napoleon asked, that her agreeing to marry him " will not be determined only by the duty of obedience to one's parents ? " " I have only one thought ", he wrote in rather more fortunate vein, after hearing of the successful accomplishment of their marriage by proxy, " I have only one thought, which is to know what pleases you. The effort to please you, Madam, will be the most constant, and the most pleasant occupation of my life." It is obvious that he was very doubtful how he ought to address her, as in the first letter she is *Ma Cousine*, in the second, *Madame ma Sœur*, in the third *Ma Sœur* only, and, after that, he takes refuge in, and remains constant to, *Madame*.

Marie Louise had accepted this tearing-up of the very roots of her young life in the belief that by marrying Napoleon she was linking her own country with France in what was to be a lasting peace. No suspicion crossed her mind that she was being handed over merely as a temporary sop to keep France quiet while Austria recovered her breath. Not only would she have been astounded, she might even have resisted the transaction if she had realized that, as Metternich says, neither he nor her father regarded her marriage " as a pledge of peace ", but merely as providing " an interval of quiet for the recruiting of our forces ": forces that in all probability would have to be used against the man to whom Marie Louise had been married.

The wedding by proxy had taken place in Vienna on March the 11th. To Marie Louise the wedding itself and all the fêtes and ceremonies preparatory to her departure must have pressed upon her mind as a dazzlement of cheering and staring eyes amid the crash of cymbals and the shrilling of trumpets, all taking place in an unusual plethora of light ; there had been the gala evening at the opera when the refulgence of numberless lighted candles fell on the rows of orange-trees standing each side of the great staircase ; there had been the blazing torches waved by pages as the *Te Deum* was sung after the wedding ; there had been those quivering

transparencies and illuminations so softly, so eerily scintillating in the darkness the night Marie Louise and her father and stepmother had driven round Vienna. Through it all Marie Louise had put an immense restraint on herself. But there had been one moment when this restraint had broken. She had been sitting in her own special room, surrounded by the little sketches and water-colours hung on the walls that had been done and given her by her uncles — young men who had been to her rather brothers than uncles — when, her eye falling on each beloved object in the room, the poignant realization of what was upon her, the sense of the unendurable wrench to come rose to a climax, and she broke down completely. Berthier (Prince de Neuchâtel), who was in Vienna officially to demand her hand for Napoleon, happened to come in at that moment, and was so penetrated by the sight of the desolate, sob-shaken girl that then and there he conceived an idea for a scheme that might a little soften the blow of separation. But it was a scheme that could not be put into action just yet.

If, as she continued day after day on that most exhausting journey to France, Marie Louise's spirit lay within a shadow, Napoleon's, on the contrary, as he waited for her in Paris, was poised in sunshine. So beside himself was he with excitement, so charged with enthusiasm were all his preparations that, in the bestowing on him of her person, this royal schoolgirl appears to have given an increase to his self-satisfaction even beyond that of his military campaigns or imperial crown. Naturally he received garbled accounts of her charms : but so long as she had the proper complement of limbs and features, so long as she was young enough to bear him an heir, it was all one to him what she was like : it was her position and not herself he was marrying ; what she represented endowed her with every attribute.

In all Napoleon's personal arrangements for his bride, his sister Caroline was to the fore. Caroline had by now developed into a plump beauty, the sign-post to Continental fashionableness, full of shrewd calculation as regarded her own interests, and said by a contemporary to be seductive as an odalisque. It was she who had been deputed to buy the French trousseau for Marie Louise, and she had collected a multitude of garments at stupendous cost. It was a time when the designs and workmanship of all

objets de luxe were at a high artistic level, full of significance, grace, and restraint, and some of the fantasies in this trousseau must have been charming. Among the cachemire shawls was one with a white ground à médaillons extraordinaires, and another in which the motif was palm-trees : there was a hunting-dress of cherry velvet trimmed with gold, and another of white rep with gold tassels. There were garters enhanced with ermine, and jewelled combs and fans ; there were fantastic little boots of satin or velvet, fringed and embroidered in silver or gold, and edged with grebe or ermine. Napoleon had had all these fripperies brought to the Tuileries for his inspection, and packed under his eye. Biennais' — the Paris shop of the moment for all such things — had received an order for a dressing-case for Marie Louise's trousseau, consisting of a hundred and thirteen pieces in silver-gilt and gold, which comprised, besides a dinner-service, chamber-pots and golden toothpicks.

2

It was at Compiègne that Louis XV had received Marie Antoinette ; therefore, as Napoleon's one wish now was to tread in all former royal footprints, it was imperative he should receive his bride in the same place. But the actual meeting between them was to be between that town and Soissons, where Napoleon had erected tents of gold and purple.

He had managed that, during Marie Louise's journey, one of his couriers, bringing a letter from him, should appear each morning at whatever place she had reached. This delicate self-propaganda on his part had the most happy effect. Her emotional tendrils, forcibly detached from her father, began inevitably to entwine themselves around the sender of these daily letters, and the fact that they were all but impossible to read, and necessitated the combined efforts of herself and the Duchesse de Montebello to decipher them, no doubt impressed Napoleon's phrases, when they were at last unravelled, all the more vividly on her mind.

In all probability he did really feel at least some of the gentle emotions he thus daily expressed, but that had not deterred him from choosing jewel-studded crowns for his Louise of such size and solidity that, as he must himself have realized, no woman

could possibly place such a load of metal on her head without not only discomfort, but actual pain. One might in fact say that his anticipatory affection for her lay half-way between these letters and those punishing diadems.

His mind accurately registering not only the largest but the smallest implications of any situation, and possessing as he did the rare faculty of viewing himself impersonally, he may well have wondered what Marie Louise, accustomed to the fine-bred, perfect-mannered men of her own family, would think of her middle-class husband. In an endeavour to display himself as attractively as possible before this girl of half his age, he had ordered Constant to buy him new clothes and better-fitting coats. Napoleon had a great admiration for Talma, who was very like him in appearance, and it may possibly have been about now that he had in the actor to teach him how to adopt some of his own effective *attitudes*. Further, when one evening Stephanie de Beauharnais, a young relation of Josephine, asked him whether he knew how to valse, telling him that in Marie Louise's country they were crazy over it, "*Eh bien !*" exclaimed Napoleon, "give me a lesson," and, standing up, he concentrated his mind on the minute shuffling to and fro, the placing and replacing of those little pointed feet of which he was so ingenuously proud. But it was no use. He realized it was not, and gave it up.

Meanwhile, waiting now at Compiègne with his Court and his family, Napoleon was in a delirium of expectation, his every thought pinned to the great moment of Marie Louise's arrival. The chamberlains and equeries who had been at the wedding at Vienna had now arrived back, and were closely questioned by him as to his new wife's appearance. He was shown a sketch of her profile that revealed the unattractive but authentic Hapsburg lip. "Ah !" he cried with satisfaction, comparing it with some Austrian medallions he had on the table, "Ah ! it is the real Austrian lip !"

As Marie Louise drew nearer to Compiègne she must, with her sound sense, have realized that though in leaving Austria she had fulfilled one of the bitterest features of the contract, a far more complicated one lay ahead of her. Her father's farewell to her had been, "Be a good wife, a good mother, and make yourself

pleasant in every way to your husband." So had spoken the royal procurer instructing innocence. Now, each day bringing her nearer to the meeting with Napoleon, she had with all her considerable powers of resolution and self-control to consider what lay before her, to be ready to fill out her part, to be prepared, when necessary, to simulate what she could not feel. In all this Napoleon's letters were an unlooked-for help. An unambitious girl who lived in her affections, her desolate spirit turned tremulously towards these welcoming rays of kindness : in her mind the image of her husband was already gradually becoming merged with that of her father, becoming a *pis-aller* substitute, an extension, as it were, of that adored parent.

On the 26th of March her travelling procession had reached Vitry. For Napoleon to realize she was so near, and yet to have to wait till the next day before he actually saw her, was more than he could endure. Suddenly he formed a resolution. His valet tells us how he heard the Emperor calling " at the top of his voice, ' *Ohé ! ho !* Constant, order a carriage without livery servants, and come and dress me ' ! " " He laughed like a child ", writes Constant, " at the effect this meeting would have." He dressed with the utmost care, and " by *une coquetterie de gloire*, put on the grey redingote that he had worn at Wagram ". A compliment to his own military genius but scarcely one to the girl whose father he had beaten in that very battle.

Once dressed, the Emperor and Murat went off in down-pouring rain to intercept Marie Louise before she reached Soissons. When they got to Courcelles, Napoleon, knowing her coach was just about to arrive there to change horses, got out of his carriage, and took shelter from the rain in the porch of the church. Before long the eight rain-soaked white horses, the cumbersome coach, came in sight. . . . The two women sitting within it were struck with amazement as, suddenly, the door was wrenched open, and, without waiting for the folded carriage steps to be put down, a man in a wet coat scrambled inside, and as an equerry's voice exclaimed, " *L'Empereur !* " this new arrival threw his arms round Marie Louise. At the moment she could not have been looking her best. Not only had she got a cough, but often on the journey she had had to get up at five in the morning, be shaken to pieces

all day in the coach, and then go to a reception or theatre at night. "I am tired out with it all beyond expression", she had written home. But Napoleon was more than satisfied with what he saw : a fine-grown girl, her light-coloured abundant hair, china-blue eyes, and fresh complexion making a pleasing enough youthful ensemble, if nothing more. "Her whole person", writes an onlooker, "breathed youth, health, and freshness." This dawn-freshness was her great asset. "More ugly than pretty, she has a very fine figure," had been Metternich's comment. The lower part of her face was too heavy, her teeth too prominent : when looked at closely, it was seen that her skin was slightly scarred from smallpox. About her there was no piquancy, no grace, no allure. One attractive idiosyncrasy she did possess : eyes tilted at the outer corner ; but this, which would now be accepted as a charm, would then have probably been considered a defect. Naïve, timid, unformed, painstakingly anxious to do the right thing, she was exactly the type of young woman whom, if she had been a nobody, Napoleon would at once have shown rudeness to as a woman of neither social nor sensual value ; but in this case, as he encircled her with his arms, he pressed to his exultant heart the whole *Almanach de Gotha*. . . Marie Louise had in the coach with her a little portrait of Napoleon, and now, glancing alternately at this and at him, she exclaimed, "Your portrait is not flattering !" at which Napoleon, who, like all worldly people, set an extravagant value on tact, must have been enchanted. In his excited mind a further scheme now arose : they would, he decided, not stop for the dinner prepared at Soissons, they would push straight on to Compiègne. Dinnerless, their coaches shrouded in the continuous blur and hiss of rain, the worn-out girl was now galloped on there, not arriving till ten o'clock at night. On getting down from her coach she at once had to face the ordeal of meeting the whole group of the Bonaparte family ; was even scurried into Pauline's bedroom where she lay ill, to be shown off ; and, final act in Napoleon's scheme, in spite of the fact that according to the law of France she would not be his wife till the civil marriage had taken place, there followed that night what Lord Liverpool called "more a rape than a wooing". Napoleon had asked her what instructions she had received when leaving her home. "To

belong to you," she had replied, "and to obey you in everything."

Of all Napoleon's exhibitions of bad taste this is the most flagrant : the most damning proof that not the crowns of France and Italy combined could make him a gentleman. He could put on a very creditable air of dignity when he wished to impress, but any real dignity of spirit was one of his chief lacks. This blatant cheapening of her the moment she passed into his protection ; this coarsening of the finer values of their human relationship emphasized only too clearly how grovelling was his respect for her as an archduchess, and how little for her as an individual. But Marie Louise was far too unversed in worldly or human values to realize the slight that had been put upon her. She was taken up with all the fresh emotions of the newly-married woman, with recovering from her exhaustion, with getting rid of her cold and her cough, and with writing home to say how much nicer Napoleon had turned out to be than she had expected ; how he made her stay in bed each morning till two o'clock on account of her cough ; and how " I find he improves a great deal when one knows him more closely : there is something very taking and eager about him ". He wove round her inexperience all the ardours that her social position invoked in him, all the seductions of the accomplished lover he had become, and, deliciously surprised, a healthy, highly-sexed girl, she succumbed just as he had intended she should succumb. On this, their honeymoon at Compiègne, Napoleon naturally kept the less pleasing aspects of his character to himself. Marie Louise, delighted at finding an enchanting lover where she had expected a monster, fell into an enthusiasm over him, an enthusiasm which, before long, was to be decidedly moderated. As for Napoleon, he chose to consider himself as now in a position to refer to Louis XVI as not only " my predecessor ", but " my poor uncle "; and further to emphasize this affiliation of himself to the Bourbon family he granted a pension to the nurse of Louis XVI, and another to the nurse of Louis' children.

3

After several days at Compiègne Napoleon and Marie Louise moved to the palace at St. Cloud, where on April the 1st there

took place the civil marriage ; but as a family and Court affair only, the populace not being allowed so much as a sight of the royal pair bowing on a balcony. Napoleon's new system, that of segregating himself and his bride from the vulgar eye as much as possible, had begun. However, the next day, when the state entry into Paris took place, preparatory to the religious marriage, they were naturally on view for everyone in the street who cared to look. For the occasion Napoleon had had arranged on his person as many diamonds as could be crammed on : there were eight rows on his turban-cap of black velvet, a cluster of them at the foot of the three white ostrich plumes that swayed on top ; the epaulette of the Legion that he wore was composed of diamonds ; so were the buckles of his shoes, the buckles of his garters, and the handle of his sword : where it was out of the question to place diamonds there was gold embroidery : white satin coat, mantle, breeches, shoes, and stockings — each had its own encrustation. As for Marie Louise, her dress was meteoric with diamonds ; while, pressing heavily down onto her straw-coloured hair, was the crown that Josephine had worn at the coronation. A slow-moving automaton, shoulders dragged at by her jewel-weighted clothes, by her prodigious train, she trod obediently forward wherever it was indicated she should tread : through wide-flung doors, along corridors, now up steps, now down, across halls and vestibules, now clambering up into the imperial coach, now cautiously stepping down from it, slowly pacing through *salons*, along galleries, finding herself at one moment in a room having her court train unhitched from her person and the imperial train hitched on in its place, and then on again, and with every movement becoming ever more aware of the lugging of her mantle, the pressure of that relentless crown on the nerves of her forehead.

Seated by Napoleon in his glass-sided coach she had borne the impact of the staring-eyed, vociferous streets, but perhaps the moments of most acute endurance for her were when, both before and after the marriage ceremony in the *Salon carré* of the Louvre Museum, Napoleon led her the length of the *Grande Galerie* between the tiers of seats on either side on which sat thousands of women in ball dresses, and uniformed men. The two figures

made a strange contrast as they passed along raked by this multitude of eyes ; Napoleon smiling and smiling his satisfaction, bowing, now to the bank of humanity on the right, now to that on the left ; the pallor of his face emphasizing the noticeable redness of that of the girl he led at his side. The crown had now been on her head for six hours without a break, and it is not surprising to read that she was showing signs of distress, and appeared to walk only with difficulty. It is impossible not to imagine that her feelings must have been diametrically opposed to those of Napoleon ; that any thoughts she had beyond her present physical discomfort must surely have been filled with the unpleasant realization that being shown off like this to her father's enemies was remarkably reminiscent of the exhibition of a captive in a Roman triumph.

But there was one pleasant and most surprising interlude in the day's doings. After she and Napoleon had displayed themselves on the balcony of the *Salle des Maréchaux*, where had risen up to them the cheers of the Imperial Guard as they marched past below, Napoleon led Marie Louise along the dark corridors of the Tuileries — those passages that were so dismal they had always to be lit by lamps — and then he suddenly threw open the door of a room which, in contrast, was flooded with daylight. At that instant her little Viennese dog, which had been taken from her on her journey to France, rushed across the room at her, and, gazing round, she saw, to her stupefaction, that she was surrounded once more by every object, every chair, rug, bird-cage, picture, and drawing that she had left behind her in her own sitting-room in Vienna. That beloved familiar room had been reconstructed for her within the walls of the Tuileries. This was Berthier's plot for comforting her put into execution.

Metternich, one of the original instigators of this emblazoned marriage, was in Paris, and when the wedding was over, and after his own dinner, he went out onto a balcony of the Tuileries, a glass of champagne in his hand. He was naturally in an elated mood at the success of his plan ; and now, as he surveyed the crowd beneath where he stood, he lifted the glass to his lips, and, outdoing all former courtiers by drinking the health not of those who had already made their appearance in this world but of

one who might reasonably be expected to appear, he cried to his audience, "To the King of Rome!" and, so saying, drank off his champagne.

That night Paris was awlirl. A female aeronaut, Madame Furioso, twice ascended into the sky in a luminous balloon: wine came spurting from the stone mouths of the fountains in the Champs Élysées: there were open-air bands, tight-rope walkers, wrestlers, troops of singers and actors, and dancing for everyone. As for the illuminations, never before in Paris had any so varied, so lovely, so unusual lighted the darkness of a spring evening. On the terrace of the Tuileries, along its avenues of chestnut trees and all about the night-dimmed garden stood illuminated vases; and vases, one may well believe, of the most exquisite shape; for some of the foremost artists of the day had lent themselves to enhance this spectacle of light. Fragonard had designed a great transparency representing Peace uniting Napoleon and Marie Louise, with warriors standing about offering them palms and crowns. Lafitte had pressed Minerva into the service of his transparency: in another of these lit pictures were seen Napoleon and Marie Louise being crowned by *L'Amour*: and, finally, high up, as if depicted in the sky itself, as though Napoleon wished to emphasize not only on earth but in the heavens this culminating glory he had acquired, there quivered in flame the Temple of Hymen.

4

Marie Louise's *Dame d'Honneur*, the Duchesse de Montebello, was the Madonna-faced widow of Lannes, one of Napoleon's marshals. The reputation of this young woman of twenty-nine was irreproachable, but she possessed just those defects of disposition that, as head of Marie Louise's household, as her daily and hourly companion, were to prove the undoing of her mistress as regards any chance of popularity at Court. The Duchess made the mistake of thinking that the undeviating straightness of character on which she prided herself necessitated undeviating straightness of speech. She confused the subtler graces of Christianity with insincerity. Reticence, tact, keeping a derogatory opinion to oneself — such she considered mere tampering with veracity.

Plain dealing all round ; such was her creed. Marie Louise naturally placed reliance on her chief Lady's opinions, and as she heard the behaviour and characters of those around her constantly disparaged, her native timidity of manner began to ally itself to a coldness that inevitably gave offence. Her affection for her *Dame d'Honneur* was as great as her reliance on her opinions : she appreciated her outspokenness as something genuine to cling to in this Paris world which was to her so bewilderingly new ; she even relished the Duchess's occasional strictures on herself, as proving she was an honest friend. She was too young to realize that raw speaking is one of the subtler forms of self-indulgence.

At the end of April, Marie Louise set out with Napoleon for a two months' tour, chiefly in Belgium. Their cortège was of a size and grandeur after Napoleon's heart : in all, thirty-three coaches and two hundred and seventeen horses. Napoleon always had twelve black Normandy horses for his own coach, and, foreshadowing as much as he could the motoring speed of the future, he invariably had these great animals driven at a gallop. This necessitated the thirty-two attendant coaches, one group preceding the Emperor's, and the third following, also thundering along at the same pace, accompanied by their outriders at top speed. Wherever they passed, the air was rent by a turmoil : hammering hoofs, whirring wheels, crack of postilion's whip or yelled-out oaths all mixed in with a general hubbub of creaking and rumbling. The sense of urgency and vitality that these powerful and precipitate cavalcades raised in the mind of any chance onlooker must have been exhilarating to a degree.

It is now, in her diary of this journey, even more than in her letters, that we have a chance of getting to know Marie Louise, not as an historical automaton but as a human being. So far we have only seen her as a child being trained and trimmed in preparation for any unnatural rôle which might later be forced upon her ; or as a diffident girl submissively carrying out her duty. In the pages of her private diary we discover beneath these outward appearances a third Marie Louise, a not uncommon schoolgirl mixture of giggling high spirits and misapplied earnestness, a young creature avid for experience, with forcible likings and

dislikings, and of exceptional sincerity.

Only by the merest chance did this diary ever come into the possession of the world at large. In the hurry and confusion of Marie Louise's flight from the Tuileries in 1814, she, or one of her Ladies, let fall a little book onto the carpet. Later, one of Marie Louise's pages picked it up, and discovered it to be a small manuscript book bound in red morocco with fly-leaves of green satin ; while within were written Marie Louise's experiences during her various travels with Napoleon. The page gave the book to his tutor, a Monsieur Müller, who in turn passed it on to his sister, who was, either then or later, living in England. Mademoiselle Müller was for many years governess to Lady Jane Peel's children, and became a friend of the governess at Mrs. Smyth Wyndham's. One day in 1836, Mademoiselle Müller, so as to amuse her friend, was reading out certain parts to her from the little red volume, and Mrs. Smyth Wyndham happened to come into the room. She listened to some of the passages, and her interest was aroused ; so much so that she bought this Napoleonic relic. In 1918 her granddaughter, Lady Thompson, wrote to that indefatigable Bonaparte biographer, Monsieur Frédéric Masson, with a view to publishing the diary. In 1922, edited by him, a small volume was published by John Murray under the title *The Private Diaries of Marie Louise*. By this circuitous route has the world been given the opportunity of penetrating into the private recesses of Marie Louise's mind.

She had by now in a great measure got accustomed to Napoleon, had also in a great measure recovered from leaving Austria, and her spirit, of the type that cannot live happily without feminine intimacy, was cosily companioned by the Duchesse de Montebello. "I have only known the Duchess two months, and am most attached to her", she wrote during this tour : and when the Queen of Westphalia bored her by incessantly asking, "Do you still care for the Duchesse de Montebello?" Marie Louise retorted, "My dear, I do not change my friends like my chemises!" She describes the Duchess as "natural and good", comparing her other Ladies unfavourably, saying they were "pretentious" : and, too, their incessant grumbings while travelling in Belgium exasperated her. Certainly the poor women had enough to

grumble at — exhaustedly bustled along from town to town by Napoleon, and having to put up with often horrible conditions at the inns.

Marie Louise set off on this Belgian tour in a great state of exuberance. "I set out from Compiègne", she writes, "delighted with the idea of such a pleasant journey. I had never before travelled without sadness", and then, falling into the phraseology of the up-to-date young things of her time, she exclaims that she is certain she will "love travelling to distraction". However, two days of this travelling had not passed before her exaltation became diminished: "We arrived at St. Quentin at midday, and were lodged in the Prefecture where everything was uncomfortable and dirty, and what was worse was the fact that I was a quarter of a league away from the Emperor. . . . I went to bed with lumbago." "The next morning, the Emperor made me get up at four o'clock to visit a cotton-mill. . . . On our return we received the chief officials. The Emperor conversed with them for over two hours. These audiences are enough to kill one, for one has to stand the whole time!"

The next day they went in gondolas along the St. Quentin-Cambrai canal "beneath a blazing sun which gave us terrible headaches". Napoleon had found one interest in common with his new wife, a love of statistics; and if she notes headaches and lumbago, she interlards them with observations such as "The town of St. Quentin has about 12,000 inhabitants. . . . The local manufactures are longcloth, linen, cambric, leather, and morocco; the trade in cotton brings in over 3 millions annually." Then, in her young enthusiasm, she feels that details of the canal tunnels must not pass unrecorded. "This second tunnel was illuminated like the first, and at the end of every *toise* (about 650 feet) there was a shaft to let in daylight." If in these factual entries her quill was impelled by a sense of duty, it is obvious that what she really enjoyed scribbling down were all those kinds of personal *con-
tretemps* that provided such satisfying merriment to the party: the Prince de Neuchâtel coming into her bedroom thinking it was his own; the Duc de Bassano climbing down from his carriage to thrash his coachman, and himself falling into a pond up to his

neck ; the Duchesse de Montebello going out to buy contraband goods at a warehouse, and the driver by mistake setting her down at a brothel. Even when Marie Louise got violent pain in the stomach from cramp, her eighteen-year-old jocularly did not desert her. Arrived at Laeken smothered with dust, she took a bath : this brought on "frightful cramp in the stomach, with colic. The Emperor must needs send for Monsieur Jouan, who, after many florid and pompous phrases, informed the Emperor that I was going to have a child, and should have a miscarriage if I continued my journey." Full of physical discomforts as the tour was proving to be, Marie Louise was still extracting quite an amount of amusement from it, and was, in consequence, extremely annoyed with Monsieur Jouan's pronouncements. To revenge herself, she pretended to faint. "He hurried in, felt my pulse, which he declared he could not find, so rubbed my nose with vinegar. After five minutes I pretended to return to consciousness, for he was by this time talking of bleeding me." Fortunately for her, by the next morning the Emperor had forgotten Jouan's warning.

On their way to Breda they had to go by a road made only of sand, so that, even with extra horses, making twelve or sixteen to each carriage, the heavy coaches could only be lugged along at a walk. The weather was as monotonously dreary and depressing as was their progress. Ceaselessly the wind drove across the sandy waste they were traversing, banging against the panels of the coach in which sat Napoleon and Marie Louise, swirling up the sand, whirling it against the straining horses, against the exasperated men who lashed them. If the couple in the coach looked out of the windows there was nothing to be seen but at rare intervals a wind-tormented fir-tree. Hour after hour went by. Luncheon-time had come and gone, but Napoleon had made a rule that Marie Louise was never to eat while driving in a coach. However, at last, hungry as she was, having been travelling for six hours, and there being no prospect of reaching Breda for two hours more, she demanded food. Napoleon was adamant, and, to add to the aggravation of being refused such a reasonable request, he adduced arguments such as "a woman ought never to want to eat". Marie Louise grew so exasperated at this senseless

tyranny that, so she says, "these precious arguments, added to these pangs of hunger," gave her a violent headache; "consequently when we arrived at Breda at four o'clock, I thought I should be obliged to stay there; however, the Emperor, who treated us like grenadiers, forced us to continue our journey". Ill as she undoubtedly felt, she had managed to acquire a few statistics, later to be noted in her diary, to wit that Breda possessed from "7000 to 8000 inhabitants, and excellent fortifications". This information acquired, she again mounted the steps of their coach, and sat down by Napoleon. Unlike Josephine, Marie Louise was capable of being cross. She was by now extremely put out, and did not attempt to hide it: the result was that "the Emperor was displeased, but, feeling quite indifferent, I let him scold as much as he liked without answering him". Napoleon now turned into a Petruchio. Not only wind, but rain as well was still battering against every pane of glass in their coach. In the ordinary way Napoleon demanded a shut-window atmosphere, but now, so as to give his wife a drenching, he had every one of them opened. When at last, at midnight, they arrived at Bois-le-Duc, she felt too ill and exhausted to eat, and went to bed directly, with "dreadful pains in the stomach, and feverish". It is hardly to be wondered at that when she was well enough to write down the day's itinerary in her diary she remarked that men were "insufferable", and that if she should ever come back to this earth she would certainly not marry again.

Another day during this Belgian tour she and the Queen of Westphalia were amusing themselves picking up shells on the shore at Fort Hagg, when the tide, making a spasmodic rush, wetted them to the knee. They asked Napoleon for permission to change. "Stay as you are, ladies," was the reply, "this bath will do you good!" and he made them wait several hours before he allowed them to get out of their wet clothes. The consequence was that the next day there occurs in the diary the entry, "I stayed in bed, very feverish". One does not share her surprise when she remarks, "I do not know what has become of my iron constitution, it has disappeared entirely".

These disturbances and disagreements between them that we have witnessed on the Belgian tour, this discovery by Marie

Louise of the domineering spirit which lay behind that enchanting smile, these formed the second phase of their relationship. Before long there was to be on her side a new development.

5

The Duchesse de Montebello's duties covered what was known as the Inner Department : in any unavoidable absence her place was taken by the Lady in Attendance, Madame de Luçay. Then came the Ladies of the Palace, who were not allowed without special permission to penetrate into the Inner Apartment ; they neither ate with Marie Louise nor kept her company. They were for show on state occasions, effective-looking figures to stand about at ceremonies or to fill the carriages which followed Marie Louise's. Among this group was a dark-eyed young woman, Princesse Dorothea de Périgord, who later was to develop into that egregious political figure, Countess Lieven. The attendants of the Inner Apartment were divided into three groups, according to their duties, and were commonly referred to by Napoleon as *les femmes rouges*, *les femmes noires*, and *les femmes blanches*, owing to the colour of their dress or apron. *Les femmes rouges* acted practically as female sentries guarding the doors of Marie Louise's private rooms ; and in such strait seclusion did Napoleon keep his hard-won possession, that no man, except the secretary *des Dépenses* and, three years later, the secretary *des Commandes*, was allowed into Marie Louise's rooms without a special permit written by Napoleon himself. So as to keep all his wife's Ladies at a nervous tension, Napoleon would pounce on them on the slightest pretext. On one occasion, when Biennais had constructed some special secret pigeon-holes for Marie Louise, she obtained permission from her husband that the jeweller should himself come to her room to show her how these worked : one of her Ladies being of course in attendance. Just as Biennais, after giving his instructions, was going, Napoleon came in. He asked who this man was. Marie Louise hurriedly explained, reminding him that the shopman was there only by his express permission. Napoleon denied he had given this permission, and rounded on the Lady-in-waiting.

“ But, *mon ami*,” cried Marie Louise, “ it was I who ordered Biennais to be let in.”

With a laugh Napoleon said “ it was nothing to do with her ”, and again turning on her Lady, with a final twist of the imperial screw, he remarked that “ she alone was in the wrong, and that he hoped it would never occur again ”.

Another day, when the music-master was in the room, the same Lady ventured to open one of the doors to give a message to someone outside. At that moment Napoleon appeared, and as at the instant the upper half of the Lady-in-waiting's body, leaning round the door, was not actually visible, she received a rating, Napoleon telling her that “ he did not wish that any man, in whatever position he was, should be able to pride himself on having been left for two seconds alone with the Empress ”.

Les femmes noires and *les femmes blanches* looked after Marie Louise's private rooms and her possessions. She was, in fact, so shut off with her attendant Ladies from Court life in general that she was like a prisoner surrounded by female warders. This segregated existence gave her no opportunity of getting to know anyone else at Court intimately, not to mention anyone outside. Not that she appears to have wished it otherwise ; for just as Napoleon was, in spite of his tyrannical attitude, sliding more and more into the place in her life formerly occupied by her father — but with the added impulsion of his being not only mentor but lover — so the Duchesse de Montebello had slid into the place formerly filled in Austria by a beloved governess : she had become the necessary intimate and confidante of every hour. Napoleon's arrival in Marie Louise's rooms, their games together of *reversi* or billiards, their walks or drives together, her riding lessons under his instruction — these were the high lights of her day. For the times in between she occupied herself by continuing that self-education which she had found such a prop in refugee days in Hungary. A few words in a letter of hers this August to Madame de Luçay give the tempo of her private day-to-day life. “ Will you kindly tell the Chenille embroideress that, from tomorrow, I will take my lesson every day from one o'clock to two, and my drawing-lesson from three to four. I beg you also to bring me a catalogue of Lenormand's books. The Emperor says there is no

objection to the tradesmen coming here provided I do not see them."

Not only had Napoleon forbidden her to see any tradesman face to face, but no dressmaker was allowed to fit her dresses on her actual person. This was done on models kept for the purpose, and any alterations needed were indicated by the *femmes de chambre*. But these and other restrictions do not appear to have fretted her; she had merely passed from the strict surveillance of her father's Court to that of her husband's. She must by now have been getting used to all Napoleon's other idiosyncrasies: used, for instance, when he was in a gay mood, to his Gargantuan bursts of laughter, laughter so loud that it could be heard several rooms away; accustomed too, to hearing him, perhaps when he was coming along a corridor, singing, all out of tune, "*Ah ! c'en est fait, je me marie*" or "*Si le roi m'avait donné Paris, sa grande ville*". She must often have noticed his trick, when annoyed, of rushing to the fireplace, seizing the poker and furiously rummaging among the coal: also another habit—when walking and talking to anyone, he would suddenly jerk up his left shoulder, leaning his body to the right, and then with left elbow and arm pressed to his side push at himself as if, says an onlooker, "he wanted to make his figure taller". She had had too, whether she liked it or not, to accustom herself to his coming to her room when she was dressing, and pinching her face and neck; and then, to gain her forgiveness, taking her in his arms and calling her his *grosse bête*. He would be maladroit enough at times to try these "pleasantries" on the Duchesse de Montebello. But the Duchess knew perfectly how to freeze him out of the room. Napoleon, too, on his side, must have grown used to Marie Louise's "*Napoléon, qu'est-ce que veux-tu ?*" that was so constantly on her lips when she first arrived in France. But probably by now her French had become tidier.

Her self-diffidence made her dislike going into public without her husband: often he would urge her and her Duchess to go to a concert or picture gallery without him, but with no success. Marie Louise must have been only too aware that just the kind of occasions that had given her predecessor the chance to display all her most taking characteristics had the effect of clouding her own.

When she did have to appear in public without Napoleon she was at her least attractive, hesitating when she should have shown aplomb, solemn when she should have been gay, silent when a pleasing phrase should have come tripping. All of this would have been known to the Emperor, but he does not seem to have made any adverse comment. On the contrary, his paramount wish was to please her, to make her content with her French surroundings.

In this the first year of his marriage, Marie Louise was in the foreground of Napoleon's life in a way that might have deceived any onlooker into thinking he was in love with her. He gave up his hurried dinners and sat through the many-course meals which her young appetite demanded ; he gave her all his evenings ; got up little balls, and had plays performed in the palace. He sent for Canova and had a statue done of his Austrian treasure at the cost of 30,000 francs. If he allowed her no intimate intercourse with any man but himself he certainly tried to make that intercourse as agreeable as possible ; so long, be it understood, as she never in the smallest particular went against his orders or his wishes. Actually, except that her young-girl freshness appealed to and satisfied him, all this laying himself out to please seems, apart from that careless kindness which was natural to him (" without being amiable he was good-natured ", comments Metternich), to have arisen from the vast satisfaction of possessing her, from the desire to see himself as the successful husband of royalty, and, above all, to impress her father favourably, to ally the Austrian Emperor to himself so that he would be pliable to his wishes in the future.

Meanwhile, the memory of Josephine, still lingeringly impregnating the air, was effaced as much as possible : in David's picture, *Distribution des Aigles*, her figure was now carefully painted out ; and in all the rooms in the Tuileries her monogram removed.

Having done all he could think of to attach his new wife to him, Napoleon decided to put his efforts to the test. He asked Metternich, still in Paris, why he never went to see Marie Louise except on her reception days or other similar occasions. Metternich began to give a string of diplomatic reasons as to why it was more tactful not to, when, "*Bah !*" interrupted Napoleon,

"I wish you to see the Empress ; go to her tomorrow morning, I will tell her to expect you."

The next morning Metternich went to the Tuileries, and was shown into a room where were Napoleon and his wife. After some ordinary conversation Napoleon remarked, "I wish the Empress to speak openly to you, and confide to you what she thinks of her position. You are her friend ; she should have no secrets from you." At this he went up to a door in the room, locked it and put the key in his pocket, and then went out at the other door. He left the two for more than an hour : then reappeared smiling. "Well . . . have you had a good talk ? Has the Empress said much ill of me ? Has she laughed or wept ?" But then he added, "I do not ask you to tell me. You two have secrets which do not concern a third person, even though that third person is the husband." He might say so, but actually he was avid with curiosity to know what had passed between them, and the next day he shot out at Metternich, "What did she say to you yesterday ?" Metternich retorted that Napoleon himself had said their talk was to be kept private. And then Napoleon's real reason for allowing such an unusual procedure as a talk *in camera* between his wife and a man became apparent. "The Empress will have said . . . that she is happy with me, that she has no complaint to make. I hope you will tell this to your Emperor, he will believe you sooner than anyone else."

In fact at this time Napoleon was making such obvious efforts to please his wife that one day she exclaimed to Metternich, "I have no fear of Napoleon, but I begin to think that he is afraid of me !"

There was, during these first months of their married life, an additional and very potent reason why Marie Louise was precious to Napoleon, why it was essential that he should keep her serene and contented. His second overweening desire was about to be satisfied : a half-royal child of which he was father was on its way. He was openly and blatantly gratified. "Look how her figure is swelling !" he exclaimed one day to Hortense, displaying his wife.

He hit on an extraordinary method of preparing the nation for the announcement of this pregnancy. On various occasions

in the past he had fixed on certain children who were to be honoured by having Josephine as their godmother : the girls to be named Josephine ; the boys, Joseph. He now demanded that these children, of whom there appear to have been about twenty-seven, should be all collected and baptized together, with Marie Louise officiating as godmother. Anything more gauche in sentiment, more subtly wounding to both his past and his present wife, could scarcely have been conceived. This command christening, which was arranged to take place at Fontainebleau, led to infinite complications. The children were all of different ages, from a few months up to ten years, and some were the offspring of far more important parents than others. There was, for instance, Hortense's second son, nephew to Napoleon himself. He, so the Emperor decreed, must be baptized with equal pomp to that previously displayed at the christening of his elder brother. A bed, therefore, had to be provided for him for the occasion. That necessitated beds for all the other smaller children, and the fact that as all the children were of very different sizes the beds would have to be different sizes too, had to be taken into consideration. As for their appearance, they were all to be dressed the same, in a long white robe with a sash. A cot had been specially decked out for Hortense's son with cloth of silver, and fifteen other cots for the fifteen other infants in blue taffeta. A table thirty feet long had been covered with blue velvet and gold fringe on which the row of cots was to be placed. All was progressing satisfactorily when, No, Napoleon suddenly decided he disliked the blue taffeta cots, the blue table-cover. It must all be changed to white. Then came the question whether such small children as some of them were could support a three hours' ceremony without sustenance. Must food be provided for them? So it appeared. In consequence each child's nurse must be in attendance. Then a fresh arrangement was made, according to which all the cot-holders were to forgo their cots, with the one exception of Hortense's son. When the great day came, and the moment arrived in the ceremony when the Grand Almoner asked Napoleon what names were to be given the children, the Emperor merely handed him a written list of the names : a precautionary measure which tact certainly demanded. After the ceremony each mother was rewarded for

all the fidget of preparation by Marie Louise giving her a portrait of Napoleon by Isabey set in diamonds.

6

With the advent of Marie Louise an atmosphere of extreme correctness spread over Court life, a correctness that gradually developed into a miasma of dullness. For Napoleon was all now for having his Court "strict rather than agreeable". So proper, in fact, had it become that it was like an adumbration of the Court of Queen Victoria. In the old Josephine days Napoleon, when in good humour, would let himself go in private with her and Hortense. He would whisper "a thousand foolishnesses" into Josephine's ear, "and if", says Hortense, "he thought I had overheard them and in consequence was embarrassed, he would burst out laughing till tears came to his eyes". "I have always seen him", she goes on, "graver with his new wife, but gentler and more complaisant." But he thought it natural that the youthful Marie Louise should not be so serious as himself. "If you care for dancing," he would say, "order some music . . . go and visit the factories or the public institutions."

But to visit public institutions was the last thing to appeal to Marie Louise's self-diffidence. "No . . . not unless you come with me."

"But I haven't the time, go with Hortense."

"No, I'd rather stay here." And she turned back to self-improvement. These recurring, cosy arrivals of the embroidery-mistress or the drawing-master, the mutual friendly efforts and discussions that ensued, did at least hold for her some sense of reality as opposed to the frigid machinery of her official life. If we are to believe Menjaud's picture, even Napoleon lent himself on occasion as subject for her attempts at portrait-painting. Her painting-master was Prudhon, who, in his allegorical canvases, his portraits, his great public pictures, his decorations, his designs for medals, ceilings, furniture, statues, headings for official note-paper, and transparencies for fêtes, gave, perhaps more than any other man, visual expression to the sentiments and outlook of the Empire.

Marie Louise had brought with her from Austria grammars, dictionaries, books on history, ornithology, agriculture, and botany. She enthusiastically collected medals and coins. Counterbalancing these more serious subjects, in her room were to be found a good supply of novels. Ann Radcliffe and Maria Edgeworth stood on her shelves. In the June of 1810 she read eighteen novels by Madame de Genlis : novels that bore such titles as *Alphonsine ou la tendresse maternelle*, *Alphonse ou l'enfant naturel*. To collect engravings, or to give them as gifts, was one of the fashions of the day, and Marie Louise would constantly buy them, filling up great portfolios with chiaroscuro landscapes, figures in costume, or romantic imaginings. And often among the plethora of presents she would send off to her family in Austria — tulle dresses for her sister, Leopoldine ; a bracelet with her own hair for another sister ; boxfuls of Parisian hats ; books for her father — added to these would be copies of some of the expensive illustrated tomes of the day.

It was perhaps these multifarious interests that sometimes made her keep Napoleon waiting for dinner. When this happened with Josephine, Napoleon had always let fly at her, but with Marie Louise, when at last she appeared, it would be merely, "Ah, I see why it is ! You have been making yourself beautiful." *La toilette* always received his encouragement, and Hortense tells us how one reception-day when she and the other women were "all covered with diamonds", Napoleon, after complimenting them on their appearance, "glanced at himself in the mirror in his undress uniform of the Guard, and remarked, 'One must have a very good opinion of oneself to dress so simply.'"

7

The autumn of 1810, the spring of 1811, were lit for Napoleon by the sense of expectancy, by the near approach of his heir. To Marie Louise on the contrary these months were darkened by apprehension ; she was haunted, so she wrote to a friend, by a "secret dread". When the Court was at Fontainebleau, Constant, anxious that in everything his master should be satisfied, would, as he peered out of his bedroom window, see with satisfaction the

Empress, supported by her Ladies, being sick in the garden beneath.

At the beginning of March the city of Paris made Marie Louise the present of a cradle designed by Prudhon ; an exquisite confection of silver-gilt, mother-of-pearl, and star-powdered lace. Horns of plenty formed part of its structure ; there were figures of Justice and Strength, golden bees, ears of corn, the imperial monogram, an eaglet, laurel leaves, and even Napoleon's star. In fact every allusion to future glory that could be envisaged was included, not only for this world but for the next, for the flying figure of Fame that was poised at the cradle's head held out two wreaths, one superimposed on the other : the earthly laurels and the heavenly diadem. Nothing in fact had been forgotten except to engrave on the side, *Man proposes and God disposes*.

To distract his Louise, as Napoleon called her, he arranged a constant succession, within the walls of the Tuileries, of little dances, masques, and plays. From the 4th of March, unable any longer to endure the swaying movement of a carriage, she would go each day when it was fine to walk on the terrace by the pond close to the palace. This terrace had been shut off from the public, but the walk that led to it was open to anyone, and here the people so crowded round her, pelting her with their shouted-out good wishes for a safe delivery, that Napoleon ordered that a subterranean passage should instantly be dug between palace and terrace. But however frenziedly relays of workmen dug and shovelled at the earth it proved impossible to get the passage done in time. The anticipated moment was close at hand. Prepared for every self-abnegation, the Duchesse de Montebello left her own house in the Rue d'Enfer and came to live at the palace. So did Dubois, the accoucheur.

On the evening of the 19th of March there was to have been a play at the Tuileries, but when the guests appeared they were met by the Duchess, who told them that Louise's pains were beginning, and that the play was put off : but the ladies were told to remain. The dignitaries who were to witness the birth hurried back to their homes to change into the appropriate uniform or official dress : others received an express telling them to come to the palace dressed as for Sunday's Mass. Eugène, who had

arrived in Paris for the occasion from Milan, was sent for : a page was sent scurrying to Hortense to demand her presence. Gradually the whole Court was assembled. The bells of Notre Dame, the bells of all the parishes in Paris, were ringing and clashing into the night so that every man and woman in the city should know that the great moment was imminent. It had been announced that if the baby were a girl the Paris cannon would fire twenty-one salutes, if a boy a hundred and one. Round the Tuileries all Paris was waiting : round Paris, all France. Within the great rooms of the palace, above the heads of the slowly moving men and women of the Court, hundreds of candles softly burned in the lustres and great candelabras. The whole of the Tuileries was astir with excitement ; everywhere there was noise and chattering, coming and going, hurrying up and down stairs, along passages, in and out of doors ; everyone, so Constant explains, wanting to be the first to be in a position to announce the baby's arrival. Outside in the dark garden a whole company of figures, cold stone in the cold night, kept watch for the arrival of this child who in his father's mind was to out-rival Alexander. Posed beneath the trees were the nine Muses ; Flora was there, Venus, and a sylvan nymph : alternating with great vases there glimmered Diana, Trajan, and Hercules ; while within a grove a centaur suffered subjugation by Cupid. Bacchus, Aeneas, Theseus, Pericles, Cincinnatus, figures mythological and historic, stood immobile and waiting. Lions with bronzed flanks stared into the night ; while here and there, among the parterres and bare-twigged trees, fountain waters mirrored the chill glimmer of the night sky.

Inside the palace among the waiting throng anticipation was turning to tedium. Louise's bedroom, in the approved royal fashion was choked with people. Round her bed the accoucheur, Dubois, and other doctors were busy. The Duchesse de Montebello and some more Court Ladies, Signora Laetitia, the governess of the coming infant, Madame de Montesquiou, and the Emperor himself stood about agitatedly. Hortense and other members of the family were in a room separated from Louise's only by a small ante-room, and at intervals Napoleon, sometimes fairly calm, sometimes much concerned, would come in to give them the

latest bulletin. "According as her sufferings were more or less acute so he appeared the more or the less agitated", writes Hortense. "He was worried over these long-drawn-out birth pangs, and would ask us whether, as a result, there might be bad consequences for mother or child. He dared not rely on the hope of a son. One could see he was trying to prepare himself for the contrary. All the same he was careful to find out if by certain indications the sex of the child could be told in advance, and showed by his questionings how anxious he was."

As this strange night went on, all the waiting Court became, both emotionally and physically, slightly dishevelled. "In every respect", writes Saint-Aulaire, "it was a piquant scene: coquettish women, drowsing men, ministers with nothing to do, the Emperor much moved — all of them jumbled up round the tables where were being served out wine, chocolate, etc." Towards four o'clock in the morning Hortense, tired out, lay down, dressed as she was, on one of the Court Ladies' beds, telling the owner to come and wake her when she heard the Empress beginning to scream.

Meanwhile, in Marie Louise's room, Napoleon, with the utmost tenderness, was hovering about her bed. To ease the pain she tried walking to and fro in her room leaning on his arm. Witnessing this continuous suffering he was extraordinarily moved and touched, strangely softened. Sympathetically sharing her misery, the earlier Napoleon came to the fore. Her sufferings became his. . . . At last, at five in the morning she became quieter. Dubois said nothing would happen for the present, and Napoleon went off to try and attain some calmness of mind by soaking himself in one of those hot baths to which he was so devoted; for he was, says Constant, "quite shaken". A quarter of an hour later, Louise, who had dropped asleep, awoke with violent pains. Napoleon, still in his bath, was asked if Dubois might come in to see him. He came. He warned the Emperor that owing to symptoms that had intervened, he could not save both mother and child.

"*Allons donc*," said the figure from within the steam, "don't lose your head, Monsieur Dubois, save the mother, only think of her. . . ."

Dubois went out. "The Emperor", writes Constant, "got out of his bath precipitately, scarcely giving me time to dry him. He slipped into his dressing-gown and went down." He stayed as long as he could keep control of himself, holding Louise's hands and kissing her . . . but before long, unable to endure any more, he hid himself away in the next room, and there, constantly sending in to hear what was happening, "listening for the least sound, trembling with fear, he spent a quarter of an hour in the cruellest agony".

All this time on Louise's bed the inexorable tussle continued. Madame de Montesquiou was holding the poor girl's head. Dubois said that he must have resort to instruments. "Must I be sacrificed because I'm Empress?" she sobbed. At last, with the utmost difficulty and anguish the birth was accomplished. Napoleon rushed in and threw his arms round Louise without so much as glancing at the baby, which he imagined had been born dead. It lay unnoticed on the floor where it had hastily been put down; and the Fates, as if aware they had nothing to offer it in this world but a blighted existence, were gently drawing its spirit back into the void from which it had emerged, when those around suddenly remembered the newcomer, and seizing on the inert and all but lifeless body, finally, with slappings, brandy, and hot cloths, induced it to give a dolorous wail.

Meanwhile, Hortense had been abruptly waked by a young Lady-in-waiting bursting into her room, whose shattered appearance was eloquent of the scene she had just left. With tears running down her face she told Hortense that Louise was giving vent to "terrible screams". "I hurried downstairs," said Hortense, "and met the Emperor coming out of his wife's bedroom, pale and hardly able to breathe."

"'It's over,' he told me, 'she's saved.'"

"He looked altogether so wretched that I asked apprehensively, 'Is it a boy?'"

"'Yes,' he said, in a depressed way."

"On hearing this I kissed him."

To her astonishment he merely remarked, "Ah! I can't feel the happiness of it . . . the poor woman suffered so much." And leaving her he went off to order the cannons announcing the birth to be fired.

"I went", writes Hortense, "into the Empress's room. She was still on her bed of suffering, and the accoucheur by her." But the room was so crowded that she did not stay, but went back to Napoleon, whom she found "still so shaken by the anxiety he had just gone through over the fate of his wife that, so as to master his painful emotions, instead of letting his pleasure be shown, he appeared grave".

He was accustomed to, and was always painfully impressed by, the sufferings of his wounded soldiers; but in a man he demanded and expected enduring courage. Unless immersed in one of his egoistical moods, the tears or distress of a woman had an overwhelming effect on him, and now to witness the anguish of this girl, coupled with the consciousness that he was the cause, had quickened all those sensitive perceptions that had become overlaid: he who figured so forcibly on the obverse of the medallion of life had for those tormented hours been forced to gaze on the reverse, on the negative world of disorder, pain, anguish, that lies concealed but menacing within the normal. For the moment this enlarged realization had stripped him bare of the worldly values by which he was ordinarily impelled. He was divorced from his centre: had lost his bearings.

Hortense, meanwhile, was noticing the surprise on the faces of those around him at finding their Emperor, usually so full of gusto, in this muted condition. "People", she writes, "thought him unfeeling, whereas, actually, it was one of the times when I saw him most full of feeling." Many too, she noticed, were casting queer little glances of curiosity at her own face to see how she was reacting to the arrival of the King of Rome, putting an end, as it did, to her own children's chances of the throne. "How gauche and embarrassed one feels", she writes, "when one sees how the world always judges one by itself!" "I had been moved by the Emperor's emotion without considering that this child's birth would dispossess my sons of the throne. . . . I had never been ambitious of it for them."

Since dawn an ever-increasing crowd had thickened all round the Tuileries: they were there to take as near a part as they could in the huge excitement of the moment; they had come to count the repetitive salutes of cannon that would announce whether the

child were boy or girl. A lovely morning, a morning of spring zephyr, made the Paris streets and houses diaphanous ; beneath the trees in the Champs Élysées the early shadows lay soft as bloom. Suddenly, about nine o'clock, there shuddered through the air the explosion of the first cannon. The whole of Paris stopped working ; every man and woman began to count the shattering bangs that slowly succeeded each other. The twenty-first died away. Constant, Napoleon's valet, was apparently peering from one of the palace windows to watch the effect on the crowd when the twenty-second burst should assure them that the child was a boy. At the twenty-second report the complete silence and immobility of the moment before turned to pandemonium : amid hurling hats people flung their arms round each other's neck, screaming *Vive l'Empereur !* voices shrill, gruff, piercing, hysterical, made frantic cacophony in the air. Then the valet's glance fell on his master who, too, was peeping out to see what Paris thought of this, his latest gift to France. He was "standing behind a curtain of one of the windows of the Empress's room, enjoyed the sight of the popular joy, and seemed profoundly touched ; great tears ran down from his eyes ; in this moved state he came to kiss his son". "*Il s'est fait un peu prier pour arriver . . . mais enfin le voilà,*" he exclaimed.

An hour later a balloon rose upwards through the cloudless air from the Champ de Mars. Within the basket that hung beneath sat Madame Blanchard, famed for these ascents into the sky ; and as her balloon serenely drifted she scattered papers that announced the great event. Along all the roads of France was heard the thundering gallop of the couriers' horses bearing letters and despatches. One of these letters ran : "*Ma chère Joséphine*, I have a son. I am at the summit of my happiness." Josephine's touching and graceful response was to give a ball at la Malmaison in the baby's honour. Meanwhile, European poets hurried to their ink-pot, and in nearly every language expressed the correct sentiments. In one week Louise received over two thousand of these efforts. The poets of England, however, remained silent.

Laure Junot — now Duchesse d'Abrantès, and just returned from Spain — found Napoleon in a state of exaltation : "How happy he was with this last favour ! How he enjoyed it ! One

should have seen him with his son, have seen him devouring that pink and gold head with caresses, seen him wishing him with his eyes all the happiness which such a man could promise to his race. . . ." So the prolific Laure's pen runs on. Later, when the Court had moved to Saint-Cloud we are given an *aperçu* of Napoleon having his breakfast out of doors, of Louise coming to him, as he sits there under the chestnut trees, carrying the baby, and Napoleon's parental delight as he plays about with the child. Actually, the possession of Marie Louise and their son, this final incredible culmination to an incredible career, was to have the effect of a fatal dazzlement in his mind. He became impregnated with the sense of invulnerability, with the conviction that every path would inevitably be made straight before him, that his will, if rigidly enough enforced, would invariably bring success. His belief in the beneficent intentions of his star became too assured.

When the infant King of Rome had first come to consciousness in Louise's bedroom, his crumpled face crimson, as an onlooker noticed, from the slappings and heatings that had been administered, there was already waiting for him a household and retinue of the most elaborate description. In the ordering of all this baby grandeur Napoleon had meticulously followed the traditions of the Bourbon monarchy. At the head of the whole establishment was the socially and morally impeccable Madame de Montesquiou. She was practical as well as religious, and when shown the bedroom toilet-set in silver-gilt for her charge she remarked that if such articles as the chamber-pot had been made of silver only much expense would have been spared. On these domestic articles the imperial bees were stamped everywhere : even the nursery syringes had their quota.

Madame de Montesquiou was provided with four sub-governesses, and her own secretary and steward. Between the sub-governesses and the servants were the first Ladies, dressed in amaranth blue merino, trimmed in winter with fur, while over this was draped a blue cachemire shawl, a design of palm-leaves forming the border. One of these blue Ladies was detailed to keep a ceaseless and vigilant eye on the wet-nurse, Madame Auchard, and was responsible for her food, her appearance, and her cleanliness. Young Madame Auchard, passed by the police

and the doctors as suitable to provide nourishment for the second Napoleon, had in this elevated position to put up with a good deal. She was for the time being a preciously guarded imperial instrument, not allowed to put foot outside the Tuileries, and not on any pretext to see a man alone. Whatever plebeian buoyancy induced by health and exciting position she may have been inclined to indulge in, the blue Lady was ever at her side to quell it ; and even when sent out to take the air in one of the royal carriages the watchful figure accompanied her.

Then, too, in the King of Rome's suite were women of the wardrobe, cradle-rockers, ushers, valets, *garçons* of the wardrobe, and, needless to say, a special doctor, and surgeon. Beyond these was a whole household of servants ; and the infant had at his command a carriage with eight horses, calashes drawn by six horses, " town carriages ", and the necessary saddle-horses for all the accompanying equeuries and outriders. The child's room on the ground floor was hung with green material, and designs in which palm-leaves figured were much to the fore. Was it the anticipation of future oriental conquests that inclined Napoleon to these decorative palm-leaves ? It is possible ; but at the same time, the palm was a tree much patronised at the moment by designers.

There is a painting of this newly-born child by Prudhon, and, as he lies there on the ground all slumber and indifference, an *amore* embowered amid grasses and leaves, cradled in a luminosity which is neither sunlight nor moonlight, a little creature existing not in this world but in some garden of reverie, he seems to be a symbol rather than a human child, to be what, as one reads of him in later years, he always gives the impression of being — more the accomplished wish of his father's imagination than an entirely self-motivated being.

Caroline sent her nephew a tiny carriage, which was drawn by two merino sheep trained to this unnatural occupation. This sheep-drawn equipage, as shown in an engraving, was an exquisite little conceit of the coach-builder's art. Its scallop-shell body, emblazoned with the imperial arms, was slung between high-curving springs, while looped curtains, and a roof that had a touch of a Chinese pagoda, completed the entrancing toy. The sheep, with ornate harness buckled around their flocculent bodies, and

fantastic head-dress, were led by a boy page. The people of Paris, sunning themselves in the Tuileries gardens, would have the excitement of seeing Napoleon's son thus seductively served up to them : along the terrace by the lake would come the absurd but lovely frivolity, the sheep's little pointed hoofs stiffly tapping on the path, the revolving wheels lightly crunching the gravel.

Early every morning the baby was brought to Louise as she lay in bed, and between her music and drawing lessons she would find her way to his room with some needlework. Napoleon was already so devoted to his son that he liked him constantly brought to his study, coming to the door himself to take the precious lump in his arms. "How many times", writes Méneval, who would be in the room, "I have watched him holding his son closely to him as if he were impatient to initiate him into the art of governing ! Whether, seated on his favourite sofa near a mantelpiece ornamented with two magnificent bronze busts of Scipio and Hannibal, he was busy reading some important document, or whether, going up to his writing-table — hollowed out in the centre, its winged sides covered with numberless papers — he signed a despatch of which each word had to be weighed, his son, sitting on his knee or pressed to his chest, never quitted him."

Napoleon had had little wooden blocks made and painted various colours to represent divisions, regiments, and battalions, and with these, as he knelt on the parquet floor of his study, he would work out manœuvres for his campaigns. As his son grew bigger he would crouch at Napoleon's side while these miniature manœuvres were in progress, every moment putting out his hand to clutch at the pieces, but Napoleon, usually so quickly irritated, was never put out : and Méneval, the picture of these two in his mind, exclaims, "His patience and kindness for his child were inexhaustible". He adored the child because it was his own ; because it would continue the dynasty he had founded, and thus stabilize his own fame ; he adored it as well because, being his own, it was yet of royal birth. That this last consideration was always in his mind is evident. One day Talma, the actor, was with him while he had his *déjeuner*. The child was brought in ; but, to Talma's surprise, instead of the usual paternal huggings

and kissings Napoleon began to give his son little slaps. "Talma," he exclaimed, "tell me what I'm doing at this moment!" The actor, puzzled, did not know what to say. "You don't realize what I'm doing? . . . I'm beating a King!" This king-motif was an obsession. Did he come in and find the child crying: "What, Sire, you are crying!" he would say, catching him in his arms. "A king! a king cry! *fi donc, comme cela est vilain!*" Did the child grow scared at his father's joking grimaces: "*Comment! comment!* a king must not be frightened!" But that barrack-room roughness which Napoleon never outgrew would prompt him not only to hold the child up to a mirror, and then make the most hideous faces over its shoulder, but to offer him food only to snatch it away; or, thrusting his finger into a sauce, he would daub the infant's face. The child was what Napoleon himself ached to have been: the possessor of royal blood. He was a wish-fulfilment *in excelsis*: the all but complete blotter-out of the humiliations that had seared his own boyhood.

From the first Napoleon had considered how rapidly this precious entity could, by the right education, be turned into the prince he wished him to become, and accordingly he arranged that, wherever in his own rooms the child's eye fell, his imagination was to be pricked, his mind instructed. A picture-book was specially printed for him with illustrations of monuments and institutions, significant places, and historical incidents. Behind this nursery-floor primer, four thousand volumes were coming into being to convey knowledge of every imaginable description to his mind. This library of "the best works in all branches of human learning" had been ordered by Napoleon to be specially printed for the child. Meanwhile, till he became old enough to read them, something might be done by coloured pictures on his Sèvres dinner service. This, again, was Napoleon's own idea, and the subjects chosen were to depict Roman history, French history, phenomena of nature, and animals. The presentations of French history were, needless to say, strictly censored by the Emperor before being sent to the Sèvres factory. The scenes he chose were indeed strange to enhance a porcelain plate, and when the child was old enough to sit up to the table, there, taking place beneath his gravy, would be glimpsed the *Battle of the Pyramids*; as he

scooped up his bread-sauce, the *Death of the Duc de Montebello* might come into view, or still less appetizing, *The Plague-stricken Men of Jaffa*. If, at the palace of the Luxembourg, leaving the table, he climbed onto one of his velvet chairs, on the back of it he would be confronted with a picture of Rome or the surrounding country. Amongst so much instruction, it is a relief to read that he possessed a set of ninepins, and a toy sheep that with swinging bell and realistic baaing made a most satisfactory din as it was dragged across the carpet.

Napoleon's son had to be educated, but he had also to be housed. In his father's imagination a mammoth palace arose, a structure that should combine the glories of imperial Rome with those of imperial Paris. It should, he decided, be built on the banks of the Seine opposite to l'École Militaire. What a riposte would this be to the mortifications he had suffered as a boy within those very walls ! This new palace was to be called the Palais de Rome, and the chosen architects, Percier and Fontaine, described it in anticipation as "the vastest and most extraordinary work of our century". In the engravings of this projected palace its parallelogram solidity, its rigid sky-lines unbroken by statue or pediment, give an effect which is oppressive. Its size has a nightmare quality, only appeased by the thought of its inner courtyards filled with the gurgle of fountains, and by the soothing quality of the perspective from the palace terraces : that to the east comprising the Seine with its bridges and quays, the façade of the Tuileries, the statues, and the Champs Élysées : and the west the pictorial outlines of Sèvres, Meudon, and Saint Cloud. This monster edifice was not to stand alone. On one side it was to be flanked by the University, the Archives de l'État, the Palais des Arts, the Palais des Grands Maîtres, and quarters for retired men of note ; on the other were to stand barracks for cavalry and infantry, shops to serve them, and a military hospital. But actually, all this projected magnificence came to fruition only in the minds of Napoleon and his architects.

"I am very sad", Louise wrote to Napoleon from Compiègne when, in the autumn of this year, 1811, he had temporarily parted

from her there to go to Boulogne, "I am very sad, my dear, to think that instead of talking to you I must have recourse to my pen, and it needs all my courage not to give way entirely to the sorrow your departure causes me. . . . You cannot imagine the feelings I have when I pass by your room and see the windows and shutters closed. You must love as I love you to understand this." And the next day, "I am waiting with great impatience, my dear, for news of your arrival at Boulogne. . . . I fear the adverse winds may keep you longer on board your squadron than I could wish" . . . and then, her mind tinged with the modish romantic novel, "take care, my dear one, for at the end of the week I charge you to let me come to you, be it even in the costume of a page or on horseback. . . ." And she ends: "I beg you, my dear one, to write to me soon, and at great length. I embrace you most tenderly in my thoughts, and am longing to tell you in person how greatly I love and cherish you." For, by now, the Napoleonic alchemy had done its work. Her husband filled every corner of Marie Louise's mind as he did her life. Physically and emotionally all her sensibilities were enmeshed. But if, since the birth of her child, there had been a crescendo in her feeling for Napoleon, there had been, in his for her, a slight diminuendo. The emotion he had shown on that March night had arisen, not from love, but from pity. At St. Helena he told Gourgaud that the only woman he had ever loved was Josephine: for Marie Louise, so he said, "I had a great deal of affection". At this time he had, of necessity, become immensely occupied with the preparations for the coming Russian campaign, and had emerged entirely from the atmosphere of domesticity in which it had at first pleased him to immerse himself and his new wife.

9

It was the late autumn of 1812. The Russian winter had set in, and on those distant plains Napoleon's returning army was stretched over the ocean of snow like some dirty stain slowly creeping across its whiteness. Against that inexorable and dazzling purity even the French Generals with their plumed hats looked only like groups of draggled cocks. It was at the beginning of

November that the first snow-flakes had begun to twirl downwards : feather-soft, without a sound they had fallen onto fur busbies, onto the shoulders of military great-coats, onto the horses' cruppers, onto the axles of gun-carriages. . . . That had been the beginning. . . . As the days went on, Napoleon, in this world of frigidity, could not stay long in the saddle but, in an effort to warm himself, would dismount, and, hour after hour, the compact, grey-coated figure would be seen monotonously trudging, one of the thousands of monotonously trudging figures around him. . . .

Finally, driving on in advance of his army, Napoleon returned to France.

Directly Hortense heard that her stepfather was in Paris, she went to the Tuileries, and asked him, perhaps a trifle tactlessly, if the stupendous disaster of the retreat after the burning of Moscow was as bad as announced in the pages of the *Moniteur* a few days back. Napoleon replied " with restrained sadness, ' All that I said was true.' " " But," exclaimed Hortense, " we were not the only ones to suffer, and our enemies must have had great losses too ? " " Doubtless," replied Napoleon, " but that does not console me."

10

Under Madame de Montesquiou's vigilant eye Napoleon's son was gradually turning from baby into little boy. Marie Louise was full of maternal feeling, but in the matter of this child, this embodied wish of Napoleon, she was frozen with self-distrust ; " she was so afraid of hurting him that she did not dare either to hold or fondle him ", writes one of her observant Ladies. Marie Louise knew that this child touched the most vital fibre of her husband's heart : what if she inadvertently injured the little creature, clumsily did something that upset him, interfered with his health ? Safer only to peer, to wonder, and to admire. As a result the child naturally grew to look on Madame de Montesquiou, his " Maman 'Quiou ", as his real mother, and Louise as his official one.

In a year or two he had developed into the most satisfactory

nursery show-child imaginable, all blue eyes, spurting laughter, and fair flopping curls that fell over his face at every movement, the meshes getting entangled with the muslin collar of his Directoire suit of *casimir bleu*. As now one and now another little shoot of intelligence began to appear it was evident that he was developing into just such a character as a Napoleon would desire in his son: vivacious, self-assured, mettlesome, questioning, tempestuous, seductive, resilient, every hour becoming more acutely conscious of his position and his environment, and playing up with delicious, infantile grace to what such a position and such an environment demanded. "I am the little King!" He knew it: and the consciousness ran softly in his veins. But beneath all this nursery bravado and tootle-too the child possessed a heart gentle as a flower: Maman 'Quiou's lavish attention and Napoleon's overweening affection had awakened a vivid response.

When Napoleon flung his arms around the soft-breathing little creature, differing strands of emotion mingled in that almost frenzied embrace — there stretched before his mind all the future accumulating *gloire* of which this small body pressed to his chest was the guarantee; the continuance of the Napoleonic dynasty which the child's existence made possible: the ineffable gratification in the thought that this, the progeny of his own loins, was yet undeniably half-royal; and underlying these considerations there was his forceful sense of fatherhood. This dynamo of emotion continually playing upon such a receptive child had an almost too quickening effect. Added to this pressure of paternal emotion was the public attention: the people of Paris who would dawdle about in the Tuileries gardens and courtyard onto which the windows of his room looked, avid to catch a glimpse of their little sun-god. Watching through the glass panes, the child noticed that many of these people were coming to the door of the palace carrying a big roll of paper. He learnt that these were petitions for his father. After that, "each time that he saw a petitioner going by," writes a Court lady, "he cried, he wept, and would not be quiet till it was brought him, and he never failed each day at breakfast to present his father with all those he had collected the day before". This taking on himself the post of infantile almoner arose probably more from the usual child wish

to be important than from any other motive, but when we read that one day, having received a petition from a widow and her little boy, he presented it to Napoleon saying, "Papa . . . here's a petition from a most unhappy little boy. It's because of you that his father is dead . . . do give him a pension," this sense of awareness in a child of less than three is proof how far too rapidly his mind was being awakened.

One day, when shrieking on the ground in one of his rages close to the windows through which Paris could spy on him, he noticed Maman 'Quiou shutting the windows and pulling down the blinds. He asked why. "For fear people should hear you . . . d'you think the French would want such a prince as you if they knew what tempers you get in?" And in his concerned cry, "Do you think they heard me? . . . I shan't do it again!" one recognizes the authentic offspring of Napoleon.

II

So far Napoleon had not revealed to his wife the cracks that were becoming apparent in the Austrian Alliance. He was beginning to realize that, from a political point of view, in marrying her he had made a mistake. It was his ineradicable bourgeois outlook, his complete misunderstanding of the aristocratic cast of mind that had tripped him up. He was under the impression that a domestic tie would be a determining factor in political policy. He was still ingenuous enough to believe that as Francis' son-in-law he had become dear to him, that he was accepted as one of the family, and was, therefore, secure. Metternich wrote that Napoleon was "frequently observing" that "the marriage had changed the face of things in Europe". Napoleon did not realize that to Francis he was no more than some obnoxious animal whose activities must at all costs be curtailed.

Since 1810 the Austrian Alliance had been the corner-stone of Napoleon's policy, and even at the turn of the year 1812 to 1813 he was receiving assurances of friendship from the Austrian Emperor. But in May Napoleon became aware of deception; and in 1813 he received the full shock of Francis' proposals: that he should renounce Illyria, half Italy, Poland, Spain, Holland, the

Confederation of the Rhine, and Switzerland. In the June of this year there took place at Dresden an interview between him and Metternich ; an interview that was not only one of the most momentous in European history, but one of the most incisive. When Metternich came into the room he found Napoleon standing, as was his custom when he wished to intimidate, in the middle of the floor, sword at side, and hat beneath arm. " So you, *too*, want war," Napoleon exclaimed. " Well, you shall have it . . . experience is lost upon you. Three times have I replaced the Emperor Francis on his throne." Such was the opening of a scene in which Napoleon worked himself into ever greater excitement, while Metternich, leaning against the edge of a console between two of the windows, surveyed him with his usual imperturbability.

Napoleon tossed the whole hideous Moscow episode behind him as a past incident now of no importance. " It was a hard test," he admitted, " but I have stood it perfectly well." Metternich warned him of the extreme youth of the army he had since raised. " Is not your present army anticipated by a generation ? I have seen your soldiers : they are mere children . . . if this juvenile army that you levied but yesterday should be swept away, what then ? "

" When Napoleon heard these words ", writes Metternich, " he was overcome with rage, he turned pale, and his features were distorted. ' You are no soldier,' said he, ' and you do not know what goes on in the mind of a soldier. I was brought up in the field, and a man such as I am does not concern himself much about the lives of a million of men.' ¹ With this exclamation he threw his hat, which he had held in his hand, into the corner of the room. I remained quite quiet."

Napoleon took several turns up and down the room, bent, picked up his hat, and remarked, " So I have perpetrated a very stupid piece of folly in marrying an Archduchess of Austria " ; and again, later, " Everything confirms my idea that I have made an inexcusable mistake. When I married an Archduchess I tried to weld the new with the old, Gothic prejudices with the institu-

¹ Metternich says : " I do not dare to make use here of the much worse expression employed by Napoleon."

tions of my century : I deceived myself. . . . It may cost me my throne, but I will bury the world beneath its ruins."

Napoleon talked and talked. . . . The hours passed. The light began to fail . . . and still he talked.

"When Napoleon dismissed me . . ." writes Metternich, "I could no longer distinguish his features. He accompanied me to the door of the reception-room. Holding the handle of the folding-door, he said to me, 'We shall see one another again.'

" 'At your pleasure, Sire. . . .'

" 'Well, now,' said Napoleon, touching me on the shoulder, 'do you know what will happen? You will not make war on me?'

" 'You are lost, Sire,' I said quickly. 'I had the presentiment of it when I came; now, in going, I have the certainty.' "

12

Before Napoleon set off for his new campaign he sent for Marie Louise to come to him at Mayence. She arrived there on July the 25th. As she got down from her carriage a letter was given her from Napoleon saying he would not arrive till the 27th : however, so great was her hope that he might possibly appear before then that she spent the whole of the next day at the window of her room watching the Bridge of Boats and the road to Frankfort along which she knew he must come. "My watching was in vain, so I went to bed dying of sleep." The next day Napoleon arrived.

The annoyance at the back of his mind that his marriage with Marie Louise had not consolidated his relations with Austria in the way he had intended had perhaps unconsciously a little harshened his attitude to this most inoffensive girl, and even during these short four or five days together he showed this irritation. The second evening, "after dinner at ten o'clock the Emperor proposed a walk upon the terrace". Marie Louise was already suffering from the rheumatism which was to be such an unpleasant feature of her middle-age, and having been warned by her doctor not to go out at night with bare arms, she now, in her short-sleeved evening dress, ventured to remind Napoleon of

this. "He grew angry, and called physic and physicians fools, and I was constrained to obey." The result next day was that her rheumatism was worse. And that day, besides the rheumatism, there was another unpleasantness. "We had the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess of Hesse-Darmstadt to dinner; the Emperor lectured me severely because I was not ready when they arrived. I dread nothing more than to see the Emperor angry with me, but would sooner die than give him the pleasure of witnessing my pain by crying on account of his reproaches, so I restrain my grief until the Emperor is out of the room." But that masochistic strain which is generally to be found in a young girl's devotion to a man older than herself prevented these outbursts from chilling her affection, and two days later, when Napoleon left her, "I endeavoured to be calm", she writes, "until the Emperor entered his carriage, as he felt too much grief at parting for me to add to his distress". Partings from anyone he was fond of always genuinely moved Napoleon. As for Marie Louise, "the evening passed very sadly. . . . I gave orders for my departure next day, it was so lonely at Mayence." Better Napoleon's unnerving temper than this sense of emptiness.

13

The disaster of Leipzig in the October of 1813 had struck its warning note. At the end of December, the Allies had crossed the Rhine and were marching upon France.

Hortense tells us how, when she was attending Mass one morning, the Duchesse de Montebello came up to speak to her, her face stamped with alarm. "Madame," she said, "have you heard the news? The Allies are over the Rhine. Paris is in consternation. *A quoi pense l'Empereur?*"

The Duchess's own apprehension had penetrated Louise. "I bring bad luck wherever I am," she sighed to Hortense. Napoleon's wife was in a state of bewildered consternation. Gently gullible, confusing political strategy with morality; belief in her father's integrity the bulwark of her life; never had she dreamed he would involve her in the hideous dilemma that now confronted her. The wide-eyed simplicity of her gaze on the

situation is evident in her protest. "You can't imagine", she had written to him in November, "how sad I am to think that you should be involved in war against the Emperor, your son-in-law, when you both have characters that should ensure your always being friends."

She had given herself to Napoleon to please her father, believing the marriage would ensure a lasting peace between France and Austria. And now her father's country and her husband's country were at war. . . . It is not surprising that her mind was in a ferment. Hortense tells us how the evening of the same day the Duchess had spoken to her she came back to the Tuileries to dine with the family. "When I came into the room," she writes, "the Emperor was alone with the Empress. He was holding her in his arms, and seemed to be joking with her. '*Eh bien*, Hortense,' he said, turning to me laughingly. 'Then they're in a fright in Paris? They see the Cossacks here already? Ah! they're not here yet, and we haven't forgotten our profession!'" Then, turning to Louise: "Don't distress yourself . . . we'll still go to Vienna and beat *papa François*." The little King of Rome, now nearly three, came into the dining-room for dessert, and Napoleon kept on saying to him, "Let's go and beat *papa François*." "The child", says Hortense, "repeated this phrase so often and so distinctly that the Emperor was enchanted and shook with laughter."

Apparently so as to reassure the two women, Napoleon kept them in his room that evening while he made arrangements for his coming campaign. "After dinner", writes Hortense, "he sent for the Prince de Neuchâtel. '*Allons*, Berthier,' he said, pointing to his green-covered table, 'we must start the Italian campaign over again,' and for an hour he dictated in front of us out of his head the whole organization of the army that had to be mustered in the plains of Châlons." Then he had in several of his Generals, questioning them minutely. Finally, giving Louise and Hortense their *congé*, he remarked, "*Eh bien!* Ladies, are you satisfied? D'you think they'll do for us so easily?"

Napoleon was to join the army on the 25th of January, and on the 23rd, which was a Sunday, there was staged in the Salle des Maréchaux a Napoleonic drama which has become one of the

stock scenes of history, but which actually, so far as any sincere or dependable feeling was involved, meant nothing whatsoever.

On this Sunday the newly appointed officers of the National Guard of Paris received orders to assemble in the Salle des Maréchaux at the Tuileries. Then Napoleon, wife, and child came in, and all three standing hand-in-hand, the Emperor made a little speech saying that, leaving to place himself again at the head of the army, he confided to them the town of Paris, Marie Louise, and his son. Then, pausing, he pointed to the child, and added, "I confide to the courage of the National Guard the Empress and the King of Rome . . . my wife and my son," his voice trembled, and instantly, "enough to break the rafters" there burst forth the cries "*Vive l'Empereur !*" "*Vive l'Impératrice !*" "*Vive le Roi de Rome !*"

In a ferment of emotionalism the officers closed round the imperial group ; eyes were wet, there were kissings of the Emperor's hands, vows were sobbed out. Then, carrying the child in his arms, Napoleon and the cohort of officers went down the great staircase and out into la Place du Carrousel where the legions of the Guard were drawn up. Napoleon, at intervals kissing the boy in his arms, walked along the ranks, and again arose the shouts "*Vive l'Empereur !*" "*Vive le Roi de Rome !*" In this exploiting of his fatherhood to arouse enthusiasm Napoleon's charlatan side is painfully to the fore ; yet, mixed with that charlatanism was undoubtedly his deep-rooted sense of family and domesticity.

"I saw", writes Hortense, who was present, "eyes filled with tears, tears of real emotion, and, a few days later, these same men not only abandoned the Emperor's cause, but overwhelmed him with the grossest abuse !"

Hortense spent that evening alone with Napoleon and his wife. Louise "never stopped crying nor the Emperor from consoling her with kisses". Napoleon took them both with him into his study. "While we both warmed ourselves at the fire," writes Hortense, "he went over all his papers. Many of the letters he burnt, and each time he came over to the fireplace he kissed his wife saying, 'Don't be so sad ; have some confidence in me. Don't I know my profession any longer ?' And, clasping his

wife in his arms, he added, 'I shall beat *papa François* again. Don't cry, I shall soon be back.' "

That evening after a reception Napoleon had a final talk at the Tuileries with his ministers. At the end, "*Au revoir, Messieurs,*" he said, "we shall see each other again, perhaps !"

Napoleon had gone. Paris was empty of him : but the weight of his hand lay heavy. Before he went he had adjourned *le Corps Législatif*, and this parting despotism was an irritant at a moment when any irritant was dangerous. "People cried out at this tyranny", writes a Paris contemporary ; "the word liberty was heard, and from this moment whoever wished to declare himself against him assumed the title of liberal. Generals, Marshals themselves, worn out, discouraged, mingled their complaints with the general complaint, and as if they felt reviving a republicanism hidden for so long beneath *la gloire*, they blamed an ambition of which they had been the firmest supporters and from which they had reaped the most splendid benefits." Meanwhile, with the situation in this ulcerous condition, Marie Louise, her support, her instructor, the prime prompter of her every action, absent, had been left Regent. Her timidity blurred all her capabilities. Ever since she was born it had been the aim of those around her to turn her into an automaton, and now, the usual "gentle gaiety" of her expression, that Bausset found so charming, wiped out by the horrid sense of a responsibility for which she felt herself inadequate, she would sit at the head of the council-table, inwardly all adither for fear that in the least particular she might do the wrong thing and so rouse the distant Napoleon's anger. "She never gave a decision about anything," says Bausset, who as Prefect of the Palace kept an interested eye on her, "and, actually, in administering affairs had no other opinion than that which had been instilled into her by the persons whom she knew to be the depositories of the Emperor's confidence." That was safest. This reliance on the reliable her strong card. But Bausset, as if afraid he had given the impression that she was a noodle, which she decidedly was not, stresses her valuable qualities : her sound sense, her lack of ostentation, her kindness, a simplicity that had about it a touching quality ; and he describes how, from all these

combined, there resulted "the most pleasing and the most attaching disposition" which, so he avers, would, in the ordinary course of events, have drawn all France to her. In view of the execration to which sycophants of Napoleon have treated Marie Louise it is worth noticing that Bausset, the creed of whose heart was loyalty to the Emperor, whose eyes were, in fact, a little over-dazzled by the Colossus whom he served, wrote this encomium on Louise after, and not before, her separation from Napoleon.

During these confusing weeks Louise would get constant letters from her husband. If the news were good, he told it her in full : but sometimes he told her little. She would occasionally apply to Joseph, left in Paris as Lieutenant-General of the Empire, for more detailed information. But Joseph had his instructions from Napoleon as to how much his wife was to be told and how much should be withheld : "Let her go on living as she is living", wrote Napoleon ; "don't talk to her of anything except what it is necessary for her to know in order to sign, and above all avoid discussions that would make her think that I consent to be protected by her or her father". Therefore when she applied to Joseph for facts she got merely sanguine phrases, or a suggestion that she should go for a walk in the Bois de Boulogne. "Keep her cheerful", Napoleon had written to his brother, adding, roughly enough, "she seems to be dying of consumption".

If Napoleon was warning his brother to be careful what he passed on to Louise, her husband equally warned her to be careful what she passed on to Joseph. "I am annoyed", he wrote to her from Soissons on 12th March, "that you showed your father's letter, and your reply, to the King. You put too much confidence in that prince. These communications must be made only to me." And again, two days later : "The King is intriguing . . . he is a pygmy who wants to grow bigger". In another letter he begs her to "show a great deal of reserve with the King . . . no intimacy". Prejudiced in this way by her husband against one of the men whom he had left with her as her advisers, it is not surprising that she was scared at making any definite decision about anything.

In the middle of February, when Napoleon was at Surville, Louise sent him a little *bonbonnière* with a portrait of his son by

Isabey on the lid. The child, toys flung aside, was depicted kneeling saying his prayers. As Napoleon gazed at the little painting its propaganda-value struck his mind, and he wrote off to Louise telling her he wished an engraving to be done of it, and, printed beneath, the words, "I pray God that he will save my father and France". But in Paris it was thought that at such a juncture the word "save" was a lack of tact, and finally the engraving bore the inscription "God watch over my Father and over France". When Napoleon received the engraving he did not consider the alteration altogether felicitous, and ordered it to be changed to "I pray God for my father and for France!" This was done in the later engravings, and as soon as Napoleon received them he ordered that a courier should immediately be sent with one to Troyes. For whom? Supposition points to the Emperor of Austria. Napoleon would certainly not have flinched from using his child at its prayers as a move in political strategy. This engraving in general would, he said, "make a good impression". And it did: its popularity was immense.

In spite of Napoleon having written definitely to Joseph that he would not consent "to be protected" by Marie Louise or her father, he did not scruple to use her for precisely that object, and on the 25th of February he urged her to write to the Austrian Emperor complaining that "he doesn't write to you, that he has forgotten you", and telling him "not to be the instrument of England and Russia". "Write to him forcibly . . ." he concluded. And on 2nd March he presses her to "write to your father and beg him to be a little for us, not to listen only to the Russians and the English". One smiles when one reads, in a letter of Napoleon's to Louise written on 10th March, "I send you a letter from your father. I opened it inadvertently; let me know what is in it, if it would be of any interest to me."

"*Mon cher ami*," Louise wrote to Napoleon later in the month, "tonight I got your letter from Plancy of March 20th. . . . I have written as you wished to my father." With filial timidity peeping through a pretence of firmness she has ingenuously informed her parent "your armies may be beaten, for the Emperor's army is finer and stronger than ever". But she herself knew there was remarkably little chance of his deviating from his plans in accordance with

a daughter's instructions. "I very much hope", she wrote to Napoleon, "that my letters may have a good effect, but I don't believe they will. When it's a matter of business, my father will scarcely listen to me."

As March went on, and the troops of Austria, Russia, and Germany drew ever nearer, the tension within Paris grew. Hortense spent the evening of the 27th at the Tuileries. She had, it seems, naturally expected to collect a little more accurate news within its walls than she could outside, but found that Louise "did not appear to know any more than we did". She, Louise, Talleyrand, and Monsieur Molé all sat down to whist. Hortense tells us how, as they played, they joked over the predictions that the Allies would take possession of Paris. But the next morning, at an early hour, consternation entered Hortense's room in the person of her first Lady-in-waiting, who, "looking terribly frightened, told me that the enemies were not far from Paris and that wounded Frenchmen were taking refuge behind the barriers".

Within the walls of the Tuileries one question clamoured in every mind: With the approaching tramp of the Allies' forces all but sounding in their ears, ought Louise, the King of Rome, and the Government to leave Paris? "The only, the actual, the important question", writes Bausset, "was to decide whether the Government should or should not leave Paris." That evening Marie Louise attended the Council which was to decide this question. Talleyrand expressed his opinion that she ought to stay. Some of the Council agreed; others urged the opposite: Joseph kept silent. But, finally, it was he who settled the whole problem by producing two of Napoleon's letters. One was written at the beginning of February, the other was of March the 16th. Both stressed the importance of Louise and her son being on no account allowed to fall into the enemy's hands. "Never let the Empress and the King of Rome fall into the enemy's hands." "Do not allow, in any case, the Empress and the King of Rome to fall into the enemy's hands." In spite of this, Talleyrand and others still demurred: but when the third vote was taken, it was in favour of Marie Louise's departure. She then re-read Napoleon's letters, and, relieved that at the end of all this wretched uncertainty she

could feel she was definitely carrying out his wishes, said she considered his orders as sacred.

It was now ten o'clock. Louise, Joseph, and the Arch-Chancellor, Cambacérès, went into the drawing-room where Hortense had been waiting. Half laughing, Marie Louise announced to her sister-in-law, "I'm leaving, and I advise you to do the same, for the Minister of War declares that it is impossible to defend Paris."

Hortense was, she says, "stupefied". "Anyhow, *ma sœur*," she remarked, "you know that you will lose your crown. I am glad to see you make the sacrifice so cheerfully."

But Louise, coming up to her, "said in a quite low voice, 'Perhaps you are right, but that's what's been decided,' " and then, as usual nervously occupied in thinking what her husband would say, she added, "and if the Emperor has to reproach anyone, it won't be me."

It had been decided she was to go. But when? The group in the Tuileries drawing-room began to discuss the point. First, it was arranged she should go that night. But Cambacérès was an old man, and the idea of such a scramble fussed him. "The Arch-Chancellor cried out at this precipitation. He declared that no arrangements had been made, not one order given, that the Empress would scarcely have time to get a few things packed up; that as for himself, he could never be ready." Therefore the departure was put off to the next day.

At six o'clock the next morning Bausset arrived at the Tuileries. He tells us of the courtyards blocked with carriages and vehicles of every description ready for the flight for which the whole palace was preparing. So as to carry away the Court as well as Louise and her son, so as to pack in all the heterogeneous baggage that had to go with them, it seems that every possible kind of *berline* and carriage and cart that could be discovered in the royal stables had been trundled out into the courtyards, and now stood there waiting, a confused collection in the blar light of early morning. Not only had there been dragged from the coach-houses the beautifully upholstered, fringed, and painted state-coaches, armorial bearings on their doors, but even the still more ornate coronation carriages. And interspersed with all these Court equipages were those belonging to the members of the

Government and the various ministerial chancelleries. Wagons and carts jostled each other — the wagon for the royal silver, the wagon for the Crown Treasure, further wagons for all the multifarious possessions and objects that the complicated imperial Court life necessitated. And clustering and crowding round the wheels, clambering in and out of the doors, vociferating, exclaiming, crying out orders, scrambled the perspiring Court servants as they lifted, carried, shoved and wedged in the luggage.

The moment came at last when the vast procession began to get under way. The Arch-Chancellor had had carried under his eye into his *berline* “ a large and beautiful casket of acajou wood ” on which, as he sat down, he at once placed his feet. All through the journey he never allowed himself and this box to be separated ; and ceaseless speculations as to what it contained helped enliven his fellow-travellers. At half-past ten Louise, a brown-clad figure, came out of the palace doors and climbed up into her coach. Her Ladies followed her. Talleyrand was limping along beside them, and, as he handed in the Duchesse de Montebello, he was overheard to say, “ My poor Duchess, what a fool they’re making of you ! ” an exclamation summing up his sense of the stupidity of the whole proceeding. It must have been now that there was left lying on the floor of the Tuileries that little morocco-bound diary of Marie Louise that so clearly discloses the variableness of the emotional weather which those in close proximity to Napoleon had to endure.

The moment had come for the little King of Rome to follow his mother. He had been accustomed from babyhood to constant journeys to Saint Cloud, Fontainebleau, and elsewhere ; but, though only three, he had the perspicacity of a child double that age, and in some subtle way he had become aware that this journey to Rambouillet was not as other journeys. Not only had there been the violent mental disturbance in the palace atmosphere, the frenzied all-night packing-up, but one suspects that through his elders he had become aware, from those broken-off sentences and careless allusions that serve a child as his daily news-sheet, that he was becoming involved in some disaster. His sensibilities heightened by his upbringing, he vibrated to every occurrence, and now, when Madame de Montesquiou came to lead him to the

carriage, he flung himself on the ground and, with a burst of tears, protested that "he wanted to stay in Paris, that he would not go to Rambouillet", "*that he absolutely would not leave the palace*". All his past training at the hands of Madame de Montesquiou, all her present tact and entreaties were of no use. If she tried to make him get up, he only fought and wept the more frantically. With a child's idea of the pliability of facts, he thought that if from the centre of his being, if with every nerve and muscle he protested against this monstrous thing, then it would not take place. Everything had always been done to foster his sense of belonging to France and the French Army : already, gently being initiated into the more decorative side of the bloody profession to which he was destined, his ridiculous little wardrobe contained miniature replicas of a colonel's uniform in the Chasseurs à Cheval, in the National Guard, and the Polish Lancers. All these intimations of martial life pungently appealed to him, bound him to Paris, to his father, to the Tuileries which was so essentially part and parcel of that worshipped parent ; and now he sensed that this disruption, this muddled departure, was wrenching him away from what he most loved. Maman 'Quiou, altogether defeated before such a tornado of both fury and misery, had to get one of the equerries to help her, and together they carried the sobbing child, frenziedly clinging to every door-post and banister, out into his carriage. Bausset, who had been watching the scene and wondering at the child's uncanny prescience, himself then clambered into the coach assigned him. "Certainly", he says, "nothing less resembled a Court journey than this tumultuous retreat of people and baggage of every description."

The raggle-taggle procession pushed its way along the streets between the peasants who with their children, animals, and furniture were coming in from the country to take refuge in the city. And with the retreating carriage in which sat Marie Louise there disappeared Napoleon's last chance of making a stand in Paris, of re-stirring national sentiment on his behalf.

Meanwhile, an onlooker had climbed up into one of the towers of Notre Dame, and from there, staring out into the distant country, he "saw the head of the Russian columns appear, like the first undulation of the flow of the tide upon the sands".

METAMORPHOSIS OF NAPOLEON'S SON

MAY 1814. The soft air of a spring evening lies over Schönbrunn, the great summer palace of the Austrian Emperors, removed by several miles from the clatter of the Viennese pavements. Though the palace is of such length that it is like a section of some aristocratic Palladian street cut off and planted there among the profusion of surrounding trees, yet the massed leafage of these trees, the quiet sky-line of hills, the spacious wash of country-breathing air, steep it in lovely solitude. At this hour the day's sharp patterns of sunlight and shadow on the palace's multitudinous pillars and cornices and window-sills will have faded out, but from branch and bush come all the tender flutings and ring-a-dings of a spring evening. Four stone sphinxes guard the bridge that leads to the courtyard gates : while within this vast courtyard itself marble figures are grouped above the curving water of the fountains ; golden eagles poise on high pedestals ; and inside a little pavilion in the park, beneath hanging stalactites of stone, lies a naiad from whose horn spurts an ice-cold jet into the marble basin beneath. All these sculptured figures and creatures are the daily static background, the mute participants of the human life in this colossal place : each day there float around them the notes of the trumpet shrilling from the barrack across the courtyard : it was they who mutely witnessed the arrival of Napoleon when, in his period of invincibility, he had twice crossed the bridge as conqueror with his staff of officers. The room he had slept in at Schönbrunn, become for that reason both famous and faintly sinister, was destined to receive added fame for a different reason.

Now, on this evening of the 22nd of May a carriage, one of many in a far-stretching procession, is just about to cross the bridge. In this carriage sit Louise and her stepmother. The question is why, when Napoleon is in Elba, Louise is not with him ? Why, instead, is she driving up to the gates of her Austrian home ? When we last saw her two months ago, she was hurrying

in all the scrimmage of flight, out of the Tuileries on her way to Rambouillet. This running-away from Paris had, at the time she did it, seemed only one necessitated and conclusive step ; but this move, in accordance, as she believed, with her husband's expressed wish, had, as the hours and the days unfolded, involved her in a distress, a confusion, a torment of uncertainties and misgivings beyond anything she had ever before experienced.

Of all the indictments that posterity has brought against Marie Louise the chief is that, in Napoleon's hour of need, she deserted him. That accusation is the opposite of the truth. Napoleon's letters to her during her peregrinations from town to town after her flight from Paris prove that it was he who deliberately prevented her from joining him at Fontainebleau. And this for a special reason : he wished her to act as negotiator with her father, on behalf of herself and the King of Rome, which she could only do effectively if at this juncture she kept away from her husband. Marie Louise's one wish on the contrary was to join him. " Why not ? . . ." she demanded when Colonel de Galbois came to her with the news of Napoleon's abdication, " now when the Emperor is so unhappy it's my duty to be by his side." " I ought and I want to be with him," she protested another day. Unfortunately there is no space here to show, as could be shown, comparing letter with letter, and date with date, how wholly innocent she was of the least intention of deserting him. Actually, each day her misery grew at his evasive letters (" As soon as possible I will see about our joining each other ", and so on). She who, like a marionette, had been accustomed to hourly dictates from her husband was completely bewildered by his behaviour. " I write to the Emperor but he does not give me a direct answer. . . . He tells me to write to my father," she exclaimed perplexedly. Anxious as ever to do exactly what Napoleon wished, she did not dare go to him on her own initiative : for all she knew, he might have plans which her arrival would upset (" I don't know what to decide," she cried out). But a day came, while she was at Blois with her entourage, when her craving to be with him overrode everything else, and she made secret plans to set off for Fontainebleau. The carriage was actually at the door, when the Duchesse de Montebello came into

the room and, using all her four years' ascendancy over Louise's mind, managed to argue her into viewing her flight not as a laudable action, but as a defection from duty : and the carriage was sent back to the stables.

Besides Napoleon's wish to use his wife as negotiator with the Austrian Emperor one strongly suspects another reason for his keeping her at arm's length. He was contemplating suicide. Faced by the desertion of his Marshals, by the loss of all he had acquired, he was filled with a sense of despair that even his virility could not grapple with. "Life is insupportable !" he exclaimed when, on the afternoon of 12th April, Caulaincourt and MacDonald brought him the Allies' Treaty ; and, again, "Life is insupportable !" That night (or to be strictly accurate, at three o'clock the next morning) he wrote what was obviously meant to be a farewell letter to Marie Louise to be given her after his death. Opinions differ as to the actual night on which his attempt at suicide took place : but that he did make the attempt was confirmed by him to Montholon at St. Helena. He had in his travelling-case a little packet of poison, given him by his doctor, Tran, which, on this particular night in April, he diluted in a cup, and drank. He was found lying on a sofa in a profuse sweat, and groaning. But after a time he recovered, "reflected a few moments", and then exclaimed, "God does not wish it." Finding himself, as he said, "a man condemned to live", he turned back, with his usual practicality, to the arrangements of the moment. He knew that by now Louise and her father would have met at Rambouillet, and therefore for the first time he wrote definitely telling her to come to him.

This letter, however, appears to have crossed one from her saying that Corvisart had advised her to go to Aix-les-Bains to try to recover her health, as, in Napoleon's next letter to her of the 17th, he warm-heartedly approves of the Aix plan, makes no further suggestion that she should come to Fontainebleau, but says that he will write to her from Elba — for which he was starting in three days' time — and make all preparations to receive her there.

Mixed with the shock and bewilderment to Marie Louise that her husband, he the very symbol of power and success, should so

incredibly have fallen, was the disillusionment over her father. For the first time her young honesty had met treachery. She absolutely could not believe that he would unite with his allies in depriving Napoleon of his throne. "My father would never allow it," she protested: "he has told me twenty times, when he placed me on the throne of France, that he would always support me, and my father is an honest man." Added to this blow to her affections, one of her Ladies, Madame de Bignoles, in conjunction with Talleyrand, had sent for Constant and Roustam (Napoleon's Mameluke) to open her eyes to her husband's infidelities. Considering the emotional strain Louise had already undergone the last few weeks, this sudden opening her eyes to her husband's disloyalty was an act of incredible cruelty. How far she believed what these two men told her, and the effect these revelations had on her mind, will be seen later.

By now she was literally overwhelmed: her considerable powers of self-control shattered. She could not sleep: every hour her face was blotched with tears. Napoleon realized to a great extent the condition she was in: and the final upshot of the situation was, as we have seen, that, with his full approval, she was to go to Aix-les-Bains before joining him at Elba. Further, her father arranged she should go to Vienna on her way to Aix.

Here then is the explanation why, on that evening at the end of May, Marie Louise was seen driving over the sphinx-guarded bridge that led to her childhood home of Schönbrunn.

2

In all this travelling about, in these incessant packings-up and unpackings and movings-on, the little King of Rome, now designated Prince of Parma (that country being about to be handed over to his mother), willy-nilly took part. The shock of being uprooted, of being forcibly carried out from the Tuileries, had on the surface died away, and we see him in the courtyard of the Bishopric at Orleans a gay little boy in a light-blue sailor-suit and black velvet cap, wooden sword in hand, drilling some other boys he had collected round him. His small organism in fact, to all outward appearance, was completely intact. But mentally it had

received a jolt from which he had not recovered : a jolt which had set up jarring vibrations in a mind which had hitherto been all harmony. With the very few concepts that his child-nature could grasp he was always trying to discover just what it was that had actually happened, what this upheaval of all their lives implied.

" Ah ! " he exclaimed one day, " I quite see I'm not a king any more . . . I don't have any pages now ! " That much at any rate was clear. And another time, his mind again turning to the past, to that adored, exciting parent who had so lit his nursery days, he asked, " Why will they not let me kiss Papa any more ? "

While at Rambouillet with her father Marie Louise had had to endure as best she could visits from the Czar and the King of Prussia. They came on different days, and each in turn asked to be allowed to see the Prince of Parma. This going to stare, as at an exhibit in a circus, at the child whose father, and whose own future, they had ruined, was tactless, but irresistible. One would like to know what passed through their minds as first one, then the other, gazed down from their mature height at this " world-renowned child ", as a contemporary describes him, this little creature who, nurtured with such devotion, had effloresced so enchantingly, this budding branch of the Bonaparte tree which they had been at such pains to uproot. The Czar tried to warm the situation by much kissing and fondling, and by flattering asides to the attendant Maman 'Quiou. The King of Prussia, though less demonstrative, also bestowed a kiss. But the boy, says Méneval, showed no interest in these two men who eyed him with such curiosity, and received their advances with a bored air.

It might have been thought that to Alexander, who was credited as being a man of particularly sensitive feeling, this viewing of the child would have been a painful incident : but at the moment he was in such a state of elation that he was far from being overcome by embarrassment when he came face to face with any of the members of Napoleon's family. On the contrary, he was going round from one to another, the genial *compère* of the situation, urging his victims to put their trust in him, delighted to offer them anything that came into his head in the way of solace or compensation. In fact his generous expansion was such that the members of the Coalition had become a shade nervous. " The

Emperor Alexander needed someone to keep him a little in check", wrote Metternich.

In the full-length portrait of the Czar at the age of thirty-five by George Dawe, though stationary he appears to pirouette ; there is a touch about him both of a natty groom, and an actor alert for the sound of clapping : no shoulders could look more restless, more improbable to be the bearers of the mantle of the Emperor of all the Russias. Now, when he gazed at Marie Louise's discomposed, saddened face he was all eagerness to help solve her problems, "and begged her not to apply to anyone but himself". With his conjurer-quality he managed to impregnate this meeting with Louise and her French Court with such an atmosphere of glamour that, says Bausset, who was present, "we were almost tempted to think that no serious event had happened in Paris".

The Czar had successfully inserted himself as a constant visitor at la Malmaison, where Josephine and Hortense now were, and from the first he tried to impress on them that he came not as victor but as fairy-godmother. He made the kindest fuss over Hortense's little boys : here at least was an opening for gifts and promises. . . . "What would you like me to do for them ?" he asked Hortense. "Allow me to act as their *chargé d'affaires* !"

He did not hide from her the small opinion he had of the man he had helped put on the throne of France, and would gird at the huge meals and the guzzling that now went on at the royal table. "What a different inhabitant the Tuileries has now," he confided in her, "for, after all, a great man lived there a little time back, and now . . ." The bulky silhouette, the uninspiring countenance of Louis XVIII rose before him. "He did not finish the sentence," remarks Hortense, "and I thought it more suitable to change the conversation."

Alexander was to have dined with Josephine at la Malmaison on the 28th of May. She hoped to interest him in Eugène's future ; and the day before the Czar was to come she busied herself with "the smallest details so that he should be well entertained". Then, on the day itself, she arrayed herself in a particularly lovely gown. But when Alexander arrived she was too ill to see him. All this preparation to entertain him to perfection was her last

effort on behalf of her children. As the night wore on, those watching by her bed heard now and again the murmured words, "Bonaparte . . . Elba . . . the King of Rome", and the next morning, still lying wrapped within the folds of the gown that was to have played its part in winning over the Czar, she died.

She was a woman who, with no particular intelligence, always vacillating and fear-ridden, had yet to an extraordinary degree showered happiness around her. Swayed by the last person she had spoken to, chattering about affairs over which she ought to have kept silent, weakening even in her readiness to do a kind action if she saw a frown gathering on Napoleon's brow, she became finally more of an appendage in his life than a factor. What Napoleon, according to his own saying, most admired in a man was bravery; in a woman chastity; and in Josephine's affair with Hippolyte Charles she irretrievably injured his opinion of her. If in the first days of marriage she had cared for him as deeply as he did for her, if she had possessed more intelligence, she was the one human being who might possibly have ameliorated his nature to finer issues. She might, but, equally, she might not. Possibly the ricochet of his pride, so hideously wounded in early life, would, in spite of everything, have relentlessly demanded its dues. In fact if Josephine had had a more positive character, the hold she did have over him might have been less. Napoleon, who had the finest acumen in personal relationships, appreciated all the power of a woman's negative side. Beneath his preoccupation with the material world he was all his life concerned with the problem of existence, questing for fundamental truths; and though, apart from her genius of personality, Josephine appears to have possessed little that was rare, she yet, over and above their physical relationship, in some subtle manner gave him easement from that questing; she possessed some ethereal quality that was a kind of unspoken answer. The fact that to a mind vast as Napoleon's she yet could provide something of such value must always remain her great point of interest to posterity. A curious alteration was brought about in Josephine by her daily contact with him. She who, vitiated by the Paris society in which she had been immersed at sixteen, had in the first years of their marriage appeared so trifling by the side of his intensities, ended, in fine-

ness of disposition, in outstripping him completely. His violence and acerbities acted on her temperament like the buffeting of weather against a plant, bringing all her inherent goodness to fruition. Her capacity for forgiveness was undefeatable. Napoleon's recurrent unfaithfulness, his searing rudeness, his injustice, his final repudiation of her to feed his vanity, aroused in her not one lasting grain of resentment. It is typical of her that, when dying, it was not her own concerns, but those of the man for whom she had conceived such an enduring love, that tormented her. To live with him must have been for a woman of her temperament an inconceivable strain, and her perpetually flowing tears were the inevitable result. Even when Napoleon had married her she was, as we have seen, already nerve-shaken by the experiences she had undergone : and added to all this she had lived for years in a state of financial landslide. Once married to Napoleon she was monetarily secure, and in the opportunities for dress and ceremony that he provided her with she found her perfect vehicle for self-expression. There is no doubt that she immensely enhanced his popularity ; such tactful balm did she dispense. But it was probably only in the stillness of the garden at la Malmaison — there, among the leafy confusion of fretted sunlight and shadow, in the scarcely perceptible swaying of spray or bud, or flop of heavy rose against her hand — it was probably only in these moments that she knew any real serenity of spirit. The terrors and difficulties of life always pressed upon her : the thought of divorce was never absent. Every moment she feared the heavens would fall. Against all these dreads, armoured only with her inenarrable charm, her broken Creole accent, she stood forth to the world, frailly triumphant.

In her love for her daughter she was a second Madame de Sévigné, and if accident delayed one of Hortense's constant letters Josephine became obsessed with anxiety. The constantly recurring themes in her own letters are fear that she or Hortense should in the slightest particular irritate Napoleon, and reassurances to Hortense of the tenderness she felt for her : " You will never have a grief so great but that my devotion will not be greater ".

Whether the seductive sweetness of manner Josephine invariably displayed to everyone around her arose more from policy

than from that loving-kindness of heart which she did undoubtedly possess is a secret that died with her as she lay on her bed caparisoned as if to charm the figure of death itself.

3

Till Marie Louise went to Aix she and her child remained at Schönbrunn waiting for the Austrian Emperor to return. In whatever palace fate placed Louise she always built up round herself a little intimate life within the larger, ceremonial one ; imposed on herself a kind of schoolroom curriculum which was at once a regulation of and a defence against time, making the hours move along at a pleasing pace. European upheavals would push her this way and that, but, once over, she immediately picked up her pencil and indiarubber, or found her sheets of music and opened the lid of the piano ; so now at Schönbrunn she would be seen again busy at her easel or bent over her books on Italian grammar. There were too, during the first days, as can be imagined, " interminable talks " between her and all her Austrian relations. And then at a certain hour the saddle-horses would be brought round to the door, and the courtyard would be alive with feminine figures holding up the long skirts of their habit — there were Louise's four younger sisters all in their blossoming girlhood stage, and there would be, too, their attendant ladies and equerries. Some springing, some clambering, into the saddle, while the darting grooms adjusted bridle and stirrup, at last the whole party would be mounted and go riding off in the summer air, leaving the courtyard behind them silent except for the rhythmic, incessant splash of the fountain.

The Austrian Emperor arrived in the middle of June, and Marie Louise had her opportunity to discuss with him the future of her small son ; his future being now her chief anxiety. Her great wish was to get the Parma business on a firm footing — the Duchy to be hers for life, and her son to succeed her. She had by now gone through searing disillusionment as to her father's trustworthiness : whether her actual affection for him had suffered from the chicanery he had practised on her over her marriage to Napoleon it is impossible to say. With her gentle

nature she had probably accommodated herself to the view that all things were permissible to the family dictator ; but though circumstances still forced her to place all her reliance on him, there was always now apprehension beneath as to what further surprises might at any moment be sprung upon her.

Away in his island off Tuscany, Napoleon, with his remarkable capacity for adapting himself to circumstances, appears equally to have been experiencing a period of serenity. "The Emperor is extremely happy here," wrote Bertrand to Ménéval from Elba in May, "and seems entirely to have forgotten that, still quite a short time ago, he was in such a different position. He is immensely taken up with settling in, with furnishing, with finding a site for a pretty country house." Napoleon still took it for granted, as did Marie Louise, that after her cure she would come to him with their son, and afterwards divide her time between Parma and Elba. The picture, however, that has so often been painted of him consumed with longing for his wife is a false picture. On the contrary he told Caulaincourt that if she did not wish to come to him, then he would rather she did not. "If her own inclination sends her to me," he said, "I shall receive her with open arms. Otherwise let her stay in Parma," and he told Caulaincourt that if she came to Elba "sad or bored" it would so upset him that he would "prefer solitude". But one thing he did definitely want : he wanted his son.

4

At the end of June Louise set off for Aix, intending to go on from there to Parma and Elba. When, on her way to Aix, she reached Carrouge an officer in a Hungarian uniform rode up to her carriage door and saluted. There was something about him, possibly the black bandage round his head to conceal the loss of an eye, possibly some nuance in his sophisticated manner, that she immediately took a dislike to, and with her usual straightforwardness she made no attempt to hide it. After what must have been a constrained moment for both, the officer, who was Lieutenant Field-Marshal Count von Neipperg, fell into place

among her cortège, and trotted on with the rest to Aix.

Directly we encounter Neipperg, we enter, as far as history is concerned, the world of fable. In the juxtaposition of this man and Marie Louise historians and biographers have met with temptation, and there are few who have not succumbed. Probabilities and improbabilities, dates and guesses, facts and gossip are all jumbled together in the service of romance. In the first place Neipperg had not, as is generally asserted, been chosen with sinister intention by Metternich to act as equerry to Marie Louise. The chooser had not been Metternich, and the intention had not been sinister. The Austrian Emperor had applied to Prince Schwarzenberg to name an officer suitable to accompany his daughter, one who would be competent in "reporting matters to me, and, in case of need, of helping my said daughter with advice".

Neipperg was at this time about thirty-nine. He was married, and had several children. His Hungarian uniform displayed all the lines of his well-knit, well-bred person, and though his features were on the coarse side the general impression of his face was that of subtlety. The metallic glitter on his chest of all the orders and medals that were interspersed among the gold cordings of his uniform was proof of his success both as soldier and diplomat. He had at one time acted as Ambassador at Stockholm. To avoid drawing attention to his black bandage he would keep his head half-turned away from anyone he was talking to, which necessitated his left eye swivelling sideways. This pose is caught in one of his portraits, and the effect is not happy. With his bandaged features he gives the impression of a captured bandit on the look-out to escape. But this unfortunate aspect of him handed down to us was only his outermost aspect, his physical fortification. Behind lay whole arsenals of experience and worldly knowledge, a character at once formidable and exquisitely seductive. Women went down before him like ninepins — that grave flattering attention, that air of sympathetic understanding, that fair head of crisply curling hair bent over the piano, those soldier hands that yet touched the notes with such softness and efficiency when the chandeliers were lit and the ladies clustered . . . A familiar and a detestable type. Not entirely. This fashion-

able nineteenth-century rôle of virile male enchanter was his show personality. What society demanded he supplied. Beneath, as his later career was to show, and as Marie Louise's lifelong devotion to him was to underline, lay essentials of value.

5

It is generally assumed that the shrinking of Louise's affection for Napoleon, which becomes clearly visible about the beginning of this September, was entirely due to the fascination of Neipperg. This, on investigation, appears an erroneous assumption. If there had been no Neipperg she still would not have returned to Napoleon.

Marcus Aurelius wrote that a man invariably acts according to his nature, a fact that a biographer must always bear in mind. Neipperg's presence did not vitiate Louise's character : did not change her from the essentially loyal, devoted, dutiful young woman we have seen into the opposite. What did change, and change completely, was her opinion of Napoleon. In support of this we have a pregnant sentence in a letter of hers to the Duchesse de Montebello written on the 8th of September. Saying that she will now never go to Elba, she adds, "Really ! the Emperor's inconsequence, his lightness !" ("*l'Empereur est vraiment d'une inconséquence, d'une légèreté !*"). This exclamation slips from her quill only three and a half weeks after she had written to Méneval (formerly Napoleon's secretary but now in her service) asking how she could possibly be cheerful away from Napoleon on his birthday ; since she had, too, secretly sent him a lock of her hair. Those who have penetrated, as far as memoirs, diaries, and letters allow of it, into Marie Louise's mind must always be convinced of one thing : that in what she said she was invariably sincere. It is then evident that during these weeks there must have been a moment when what one can only call an explosion as regards her opinion of Napoleon must have taken place in her mind. As we have already seen, the train that led to this explosion had been laid several months back, when, after her flight from Paris, those round her had deliberately tried to injure her affection for her husband. Those whom Madame Durand, in the language of her

time, refers to as Louise's "perfidious counsellors" had "used all their dexterity to dissuade her from joining her husband. On the one hand they told her the climate of Elba would be fatal to her health; on the other that Napoleon, precipitated from the throne partly by the armies of his father-in-law . . . would not see her with the same eyes as in the past, and that she would have to put up with his continuous brusqueness and reproaches." Further, Roustam and Constant had borne witness to her of Napoleon's infidelities. No two men could have been more fully primed, more convincingly damning than were this Egyptian and this Frenchman. They had lived at the Emperor's elbow: they saw, they knew everything. Roustam slept every night on a mattress outside Napoleon's door: Constant was aware of all his secret comings and goings. Did they tell Louise how, the night the Emperor had arrived at the Tuileries from his Russian campaign, he had, after going to see his wife, cried out, "Quick! A bath, supper, and Madame Walewska!" Did they reveal to her that this Polish mistress and Mademoiselle Georges had both appeared one rainy night at Fontainebleau each offering to accompany him to Elba? Actually, Napoleon had sent them away without so much as seeing them: but what version of the visit was given by this unscrupulous couple to Marie Louise? It is easy to realize how the knowledge of the arrival of those two women at Fontainebleau must inevitably to her mind have fitted in with the reluctance Napoleon had shown over her joining him there — explained why, for the first week or so, he had avoided expressing any definite wish for her to come; and why, when Colonel Galbois had brought her a letter from Napoleon, and she had implored him to let her go back with him to Fontainebleau, he had refused. Were her perpetual tears at Rambouillet caused in part by the impact of these revelations on her naïve and devoted spirit? Possibly her mind put up such resistance to all this dreadful information that she managed, in spite of the worst Constant and Roustam could say, not to believe it, for though they may have sown seeds that were to germinate later, her intention to join Napoleon was not in the least deflected. But those who wished to separate her permanently from her husband had in Neipperg a far shrewder and more effective agent.

When he accompanied her to Aix his instructions, emanating from the Emperor Francis, had been that he was "carefully to seek to alienate the Duchess of Colorno from any idea of a journey to Elba . . . to leave no means untried to divert her from her purpose", and at this watering-place, in their daily meetings and constant rides, he had every opportunity of subtly moulding and impressing her mind according to Austrian dictates.

During these weeks she was fretted with perplexity, tortured with mental conflict. On one side was Neipperg losing no opportunity of insinuating that if she went to Elba she would injure her own and her son's prospects, and militate fatally against the child's chance of succeeding to the throne of Parma. On the other was her still affectionate feeling for Napoleon, and her sense of duty as his wife; and beneath this again were her doubts as to his faithfulness, as to whether now she really was necessary for his happiness, or if, as those around her insisted, "he had only wanted her to strengthen his dynasty and to be a figurehead to his court", and, further, that "she would only be in his way if she went to Elba". These were the words in which, later in her life, she in part explained to Lady Burghersh the confusion of her outlook. If Napoleon had indeed been unfaithful to her, if he indeed did not really want her, then did not her duty lie more in looking after the interests of her son than in going to Elba?

And over and above these considerations there was yet another. The Vatican had not considered Napoleon's marriage with Marie Louise valid, because his marriage with Josephine had been annulled only by the officiality of the Archbishopric of Paris, and not by the Holy See; whereas, according to the canonical law, the consent of the Pope was necessary for the annulment of a royal marriage. After Josephine's death in the May of 1814 the Pope declared that he wished to consecrate Napoleon's second marriage, and thus render it valid. The Austrian Court, however, objected to this, for to allow it was to admit that Marie Louise had been, not wife, but mistress to Napoleon, and her son a bastard. All Vienna was now discussing this question—was she actually Napoleon's wife or was she not? It is hardly likely that Neipperg, in his talks with her, would not have made use of these facts, which, to Marie Louise's strictly religious mind, would have

such deadly effect both in alienating her feelings from Napoleon, as having practised a deception on her, and in making her consider herself freed from any actual obligation to return to him.

It was while her mind was entangled in this cat's-cradle of complications ; tormented by the feeling of her own impotence as against the overwhelming figures of her father, of Metternich, and the Allies, while she was yet acutely aware of the necessity of placating them for the sake of the future of her son ; it was while she was desperately unburdening herself in letters to Méneval, or turning to Neipperg for his opinion and advice, it was at this moment that Napoleon made two fatal moves, and, so far as it is possible to piece together such an involved situation, it appears to have been these moves that finally estranged her from him entirely. He suddenly made up his mind that she must come to him at Elba immediately, even to her setting out, as she wrote to her father, " all alone ". Immersed as she now was in the idea of definitely getting her promised Parma possession handed over to her, and of securing it for her child, and knowing that her one hope in this was to please her father, she wrote to Napoleon explaining that she dared not undertake the journey without the Emperor's consent. Napoleon then made the first of his two fatal moves. Losing his temper, he wrote her a harsh letter threatening to abduct her if she did not obey him. It is easy to realize how, on receiving such a letter, all her latent fear of him must have risen to the surface. This anger and this threat are indicative of the real nature of his feelings ; his letter was prompted, not by love, but by indignation that he should be deprived of his rights, and, as M. Wertheimer points out, because his wife's absence " isolated him politically, and destroyed that fable of an understanding with Austria which he had given out to the world ". We have already heard Napoleon confiding in Caulaincourt that he would rather Marie Louise should not come to Elba unless she came of her own wish, how he would prefer solitude to the daily contemplation of a bored face. There now supervened the second incident, which, so perfectly does it explain Louise's protest to Madame de Montebello as to Napoleon's flippant behaviour, that one cannot but think the one was the cause of the other. On the 1st of September Madame Walewska, bringing with her the son she had had by

Napoleon, arrived in Elba and stayed two nights. She left Elba on the 3rd of September, and Marie Louise's letter to the Duchesse de Montebello was written on the 8th from Geneva, on her way back to Austria from Aix. It is hardly probable, though it is just possible, that the arrival in Elba of this Polish mistress of Napoleon was known to Louise when she wrote her letter, but it is quite credible that, through the Austrian Secret Service, Madame Walewska's projected journey or actual embarkation for Elba had already reached Neipperg's vigilant ears and been passed on to Louise, and that in consequence her exclamation in her letter was a gasp of astonishment and indignation that at almost the very moment her husband was ordering her to return to him he was actually arranging for a visit from his former mistress. What words could more exactly describe his behaviour than "*L'Empereur est vraiment d'une inconséquence, d'une légèreté !*" In talking of this crucial period later to Lady Burghersh, Marie Louise said "she was told . . . that Madame Walewska, the woman he really cared for, had joined him". What then must Louise have felt, she who Napoleon said was "virtue itself", when she heard of this visit to Elba of Madame Walewska and her son? these two who in their relation to Napoleon were a kind of shameful replica of herself and her son. It is perfectly understandable that in the shock of this revelation, in this flaming affront, her mind, so limpid, so direct, so unversed in masculine standards, underwent a complete revulsion against the man to whom she had given herself. Was it not inevitable that her feeling for him, drawn forth as it had originally been by a sense of duty and a sense of loneliness combined, should, under such an assault, wither completely? From such evidence as we have it appears that though she was told of Madame Walewska's arrival she was not told of her departure, and therefore she seems to have considered that his Polish friend was to be a fixture. In later years she said that her father and Metternich not only kept back Napoleon's letters but assured her that, having got a mistress with him, he now "cared nothing for her".

It is said against Marie Louise that her feeling for Napoleon could not end so abruptly. But what, given the circumstances, was more natural? A healthy, normal girl, at an age when to

love someone is inevitable, she had flung the flower-wreath of her young affections round the neck of the first man life had offered : stirred by his alternate tenderness and roughness, she had become all amorous schoolgirl to her hero. By segregating her entirely from other men, by bestowing attentions on her at every hour, Napoleon had netted her emotions and kept her mind fixed on himself, but it was essentially an artificial relationship, kept intact by Napoleon's acumen. His presence removed, her belief in him once gone, the whole erotic edifice fell to pieces ; and later, initiated into a confluence of being with Neipperg beyond anything she had before conceived possible, she could look back on her relationship with Napoleon with opened eyes, and say with truth to Lady Burghersh, " I never loved him ".

If in the knowledge of his blatant unfaithfulness her affection for him received its death-blow, so, equally, must her sense of its being her duty to return to him, especially when coupled now with the realization that in the eyes of devout Catholics her marriage was not even valid. Why, when her feeling for him was all but dead, why should she bestow herself on him anew, sacrifice herself a second time, not as on the first occasion in accordance with her father's wishes and for the sake of ensuring peace to her country, but to pander to a faithless man who, she could not but realize after living with him for four years, had done everything he had done for her basically to please himself, and of whose ill-temper she had always lived in dread ? Those whose sense of duty is acute ask that others should perform theirs. In all Marie Louise's references to Napoleon at this time it is clear that she, the most duty-bound creature, now considered herself, owing to his behaviour, freed from her obligations. It would have been a great act of pity, an act of supererogation if, in spite of his adultery, in spite of the pressure being brought to bear on her by those around her, she had gone back to him. And we have her own word for it that if she had thought him in need of pity she would even now have so sacrificed herself. Neipperg says she told him that if Napoleon " were unhappy, or had an unworthy fate overtaken him, no consideration would have induced her to disunite her fate from his ". But at Elba, Napoleon, dictating and interfering in every direction, was being treated by the flattered islanders as a

god. Both in his letters to Louise and in Bertrand's to Méneval — Bertrand having gone with Napoleon to Elba — he seemed exceptionally content. Almost every letter spoke of his excellent health; he was riding, driving, and boating; at the end of August he had started hunting: his mother was with him; and Pauline so he told Louise, was coming in September. He was busy arranging about his Elba houses. Here, certainly, seemed no outstanding call for pity. Given all the circumstances it would be a harsh mind that would condemn Marie Louise for not returning to Napoleon; that did not consider her on every count freed from the obligation. The shame in the matter lay, not in her refusal to go to Elba, but in her ever having been forced into such a nuptial relationship. Her marriage had been nothing more than a political racket, a ceremonial mockery, an international agreement in which she was the living consideration: any religion there had been in the transaction was to be found in her young tenderness of heart that had immolated itself for her country's good.

6

The hopes raised and hopes dashed that Marie Louise experienced before she finally came into possession of Parma were limitless. "Each day", wrote Méneval, "brought a new version; today Parma was assured to her; tomorrow it was given to someone else." At one moment it was even suggested that she should be fobbed off with an indemnity. Ultimately she did come into possession of it, but for her life only: her overwhelming wish that her son should inherit was overruled.

Marie Louise's dislike of Neipperg when she first saw him bowing at her carriage door, had not been of long duration. Very shortly she was writing to her father, "Count Neipperg is most attentive to me, and his manners please me very much". Realizing that the strongest leverage to be gained over her was through her affections, he managed, by emphasizing the need for circumspection as regarded her child's future, to make her pliable to the Emperor's and Metternich's wishes, even to the point of waiting to go to Parma till her possession of it had been sanctioned by the Congress of Vienna. Her gradually changing conception of

Neipperg; her initial dislike turning to acceptance of him as confidant and adviser; this in turn giving place to a profounder feeling, an overpowering emotion that made her accept him first as lover, and, after the death of Napoleon, as husband; of all this only the surface facts are known: the stresses that lay beneath are unrecorded. In the shipwreck of her reliance both on her father and on Napoleon it was almost inevitable that she should turn whole-heartedly to her new mentor. The comforting tones of that grave male voice; that astute knowledge of the world; those competent shoulders capable of carrying all her troubles: here was reassurance in which her self-diffidence and perplexities could find sanctuary. It must be remembered that she was still only twenty-two. No breaker of vows can be called irreproachable, but if there can ever be extenuating circumstances such there surely were in the case of this bewildered girl who when little more than a child had been manipulated by the powerful for their own ends.

She had sacrificed herself once for her country, and she sacrificed herself a second time, this time to save Napoleon's self-esteem: a sacrifice that has passed curiously unnoticed. Neipperg's wife died in the spring of 1815, and if Louise had divorced Napoleon she could have saved her reputation and married the man whom she had grown to adore. But she refused even to consider this divorce for which at heart she must so have longed. It is a question whether, actually, the Church would have countenanced it, but that she believed it possible is proved by her persistence in asserting that she never would agree to such a step. In this acceptance of a besmirched reputation rather than injure Napoleon (when all his own infidelities were known to her, when in all but name she was married to Neipperg, and bore him two children) is shown again her self-sacrificing, generous spirit.

Neipperg was created *Chevalier d'honneur* by the Austrian Emperor, and ordered to attend Marie Louise in Parma, where he virtually acted as prince consort. It seems unlikely that in a man of his temperament Louise should have found enduring reliability and love: and yet so it was. During her gentle rule in Parma — "all my care and attention", she wrote, "is bent on the best way to relieve the misery of the people whom I wish to make happy"

— in all her efforts to this end Neipperg was her counsellor ; as wise as he was disinterested. “ Though still very young I am terribly disgusted with the world . . . ” she wrote when she was twenty-four ; “ whenever I go into a convent I always have the fancy to envy those who have sought refuge there.” Lacking the convent, she took refuge in her inner domestic life with Neipperg and their two children ; and, publicly, in the interest of promoting one benefit after another for the people of Parma. At her death the Abbé Mislin wrote that “ Hospitals, museums, libraries, churches, prisons, institutions of charity, of administration, of construction, of public utility, all have been founded, maintained, and improved by her and have constantly been the object of her care and liberality ”. And in her letters we find her writing with more enthusiasm of the walls of a new cemetery that she is building than of the Court balls at which she feels it her duty to dance till she “ nearly falls asleep ”.

And in these practical interests that were pleasures, and these ostensible pleasures that were tedium, her past life with Napoleon faded out almost completely. Looking back on it, she at different times let fall that it was like “ a bad dream ” ; that “ she had been happy ” ; that it was “ slavery ” ; that Napoleon “ had always been kind ” ; that she had been “ afraid of him ”. A contradictory catalogue. But of just such contradictions are most human relationships composed : only rarely is there one in which credit outruns debit. And this rare relationship Marie Louise had now found. Whatever her feeling for Napoleon had originally been, it was as inert now as was the bust of him that stood in the corridor of her Parma palace, the unseeing eyes for ever fixed on the passage along which she came and went.

When in 1829 Neipperg died, Louise wrote, if conventionally, in her case with aching heart, of “ the best of husbands, the most faithful of friends, and all my earthly happiness ” ; and, again, “ all my home life, all my happiness is ruined for ever ”. So scrupulous had her second husband been in his powerful position as virtual ruler of Parma that he left behind him only a few louis, and a cardboard box full of the stars and decorations of most of the highest orders in Europe.

At the beginning of March 1815, an event occurred that sent a quiver of consternation through Europe. Napoleon had escaped from Elba.

The news reached Paris at midday of Sunday, March the 5th. On the 20th a friend of Hortense, Monsieur Devaux, came to tell her that the general impression was that Napoleon would be in Paris by the evening : and at seven o'clock an officer of the National Guard arrived telling her her presence was requested at the Tuileries to await the Emperor's arrival. She set off, and, driving up to the palace, found it the centre of a mass of people. "The sight of my carriage provoked the most lively acclamations . . . the National Guard on duty presented arms . . . and gave vent to such shouts that I thought the Emperor must be coming in by another gate." In the great courtyard five or six hundred officers were walking about "embracing each other, and congratulating themselves on being about to see Napoleon again". Within the Tuileries, where one may believe the chandeliers would by now have been lit to counter the dimming light of the spring evening, more and more of the imperial faithful were arriving, and were wandering in and out of the great rooms. Julie, Joseph's wife, drove into the courtyard a few minutes after Hortense, and again there was such a hullabaloo of shouting outside that everyone thought it must be Napoleon. Everywhere the air was charged with emotion. Expectancy was on edge. Actually, it was this very night, four years ago, that the King of Rome had been born. Now, as the waiting men and women trailed about, it was noticed that the huge carpet covering the floor of the throne-room had had its original bees blotted out by superimposed woven lilies. Gazing at these offending lilies, someone noticed that one of them appeared to be loose. She gave it a tug, and the bees came to view beneath. Others joined in, more and more of the lilies were wrenched off, and, "amid peals of laughter from the whole company, in less than half an hour the carpet again became imperial".

Time passed : and still they waited. "Night had already come", writes Hortense. "The crowd had gone. He was no

longer expected. If he had put off his entrance till the next morning, his triumph would have been complete, but he had never, at any time, made a triumphal entrance into Paris. He always came back to his palace in the night and it was only next morning that one knew of his arrival."

At last, at nine o'clock, "a wretched cabriolet" drew up at the door of the Tuileries near the *pavillon de Flore*. Count Lavalette, who was among the crowd waiting inside the palace, tells us that Napoleon "had hardly put his foot to the ground when there was heard a cry of *Vive l'Empereur!* but a cry to split the rafters, a terrific cry: it came from the half-pay officers crowding, suffocated, in the hall, and filling the staircase up to the top. The Emperor was dressed in his famous grey redingote. I went towards him, and the Duc de Vicence called out,

"'For God's sake, put yourself in front of him, so that he can get on!'

"He began to mount the stairs. I went in front of him, moving backwards, one step away, gazing at him with profound emotion, my eyes swimming in tears and, in the delirious state I was in, I kept on repeating '*Quoi! c'est vous! c'est vous! c'est enfin vous!*'

"As for him, he walked slowly up the stairs, his eyes shut, his hands stretched out in front of him like a blind man, and only showing his happiness by his smile. When he reached the landing of the first floor, the ladies wanted to come forward to meet him, but a flood of officers from the landing above leapt in their way, and if they had been less quick the flood would have crushed them."

Among these jostled women were Hortense and Julie, who had at first tried to get down the stairs to greet Napoleon but, pushed this way and that in the frantic rush forward, had only just had time to back out of the crowd "for fear of being suffocated, and, at that very moment, we saw him uplifted by a thousand arms and carried in triumph to his rooms".

The Allies' reaction to Napoleon's escape was that, burying the differences that had crept into the Congress of Vienna, they

again presented a solid front in their determination once and for all to hobble the fellow. Talleyrand godfathered a proclamation that was issued on March the 13th declaring him an outlaw.

Regarding Marie Louise, this dramatic resurrection of Napoleon only opened up for her new vistas of worry. If not already her lover, Neipperg had by now entirely ousted Napoleon in her heart, and the thought of the possibility of having to return to her husband stirred afresh all her original childhood fears of him. It was now that Méneval wrote that "the Empress is so tormented in her mind that she cannot contemplate returning to France except with terror". "You can imagine how anxious I am", she wrote to a woman friend. "I am quite crushed, and, if God does not help me, I shall never have the moral and physical strength to bear it all." To her father she wrote, "At the moment of a new crisis which . . . threatens to bring down fresh disasters on my head, I can find no surer refuge, no kindlier haven, than that which I implore your fatherly tenderness to provide for myself and my son. . . . Entire submission will be the first token of my gratitude."

As for the little Prince of Parma, owing to Napoleon's escape, the atmosphere round him became electrified. He was now not only a future menace to the Viennese Government but a very present one because of the fear he should be kidnapped, concealed in a chaise, and rushed to France to strengthen his father's position. Lord Castlereagh pointed out this danger to Metternich; and with all the French attendants round the child at Schönbrunn his abduction would not have been difficult. Hager, Prefect of Police, was on the fidget to have Madame de Montesquiou dismissed, chiefly on account of her being the mother of that too enthusiastic imperialist, Count Anatole, a young man who was *persona grata* in Viennese society. What would be easier than for Count Anatole to obtain a passport from the French Embassy for himself and a child under assumed names? Decidedly Maman'Quiou must go. Also, Hager wished the little Prince to leave Schönbrunn and to live in Vienna at the Hofburg, as being safer. The dreadful news that she was to be forced to desert the child was broken to Madame de Montesquiou; and the boy with his under-governess and nurse was lodged in the great Vienna

palace, close up to whose façade rattled all the restless come-and-go of Viennese street life. To Madame de Montesquiou, who, since the child's birth, had had for him the feelings of a mother, this parting was terrible. And even more lacerating to read of is the child's misery as "he asked ceaselessly for his *Maman 'Quiou*". The sudden disappearance of this hourly familiar figure had on him deplorable results : the most affectionate and impressionable child possible, he was rent in twain. In the flight from the Tuileries, and the unexplained disappearance of his father, his sense of security had received its first rough jolt, and here was a worse one in which the most tender fibres of his heart were involved. From now on all sense of the reliability of life left him. His thoughts turned inwards ; he was a changed child. There is no doubt that this harsh parting was a fatal factor in his medical history, weakening his resistance to the germs of consumption already in his blood.

With a practicality in advance of her time Madame de Montesquiou insisted on being given a medical certificate to vouch for her charge being in perfect health when she left him. Did she know of his tubercular inheritance on the Austrian side ? Had she noticed, or had Corvisart warned her of, certain symptoms ? We do not know. *Maman 'Quiou* grasps her certificate, and, saying nothing, retires.

Six weeks after she had been separated from her pupil, Méneval, who was leaving Marie Louise and returning to France, went to the Hofburg to say goodbye to the little prince. As he came into the room he was surprised to see, in place of the loquacious child full of his small graces, a melancholy little boy who, instead of prancing forward to meet him as he used to, gave no sign that he so much as knew him. "I asked him", writes Méneval, ". . . if he would give me any messages for his father whom I was going to see again. He looked at me in a sad and significant way without answering, then, gently disengaging his hand from mine, silently went away to the embrasure of a distant window. After having exchanged some words with the people in the *salon* I went over to where he stood apart and as if watching everything, and as, overcome with emotion, I leant

down to him to say good-bye, he drew me towards the window and said in a quite low voice, looking at me with a touching expression, 'Monsieur Méneval, you will tell him that I always love him very much.' "

9

Though Madame de Montesquiou had gone, the Prince still had his under-governess, Madame Soufflot, familiarly, Toto ; also her daughter Fanny, a little person of fifteen to whom he was devoted ; and his nurse Marchand. This little group now represented France and his past, a past which they perpetually talked of, holding it up before him as an enchanted mirror in which he saw himself as he used to be, the world's freshest ornament, that egregious figurine, "the little King". These French women would play geographical games with him which were arranged so that he should always win, when he would be proclaimed "Emperor". When he wanted to get his own way with them he would charmingly fall on his knee and kiss hands. With an idea of carrying on his education, which, at Napoleon's wish, had begun at the age of two, they would persuade him to chirrup out some of la Fontaine's fables that he knew by heart, or passages from Racine ; or, a book open in front of him, he would read the words he knew, and supply *à la fantaisie* those he did not, while the women applauded his cleverness. Into this tender nursery world of inconclusive valuations and scarcely-felt pressure, into this happy muddle of education, futility, and love there now entered a very different figure, that of Count Maurice Dietrichstein-Proskau-Leslie.

Count Maurice was the younger brother of Prince François Joseph Dietrichstein ; and at the end of June in 1815 he was appointed Governor and Assistant Grand Master to the Prince : in other words, he was to be head tutor, trainer of the mind that darted about with such agility behind those infantile but perspicacious eyes. In Krichuber's portrait of him the features are strong but the expression a shade pernicky : self-admiration is just tinged with apprehension lest others too should not admire. He had been in the army, had fought against the French, and had been taken prisoner. He was a cultured man, connoisseur,

musician, and composer. He had on one occasion set some poems of Goethe to music, and in return had received the hoped-for gracious words. His house in Vienna was a centre both for the intelligentsia and *beau monde*. But in spite of all this gratifying froth of success, somewhere within him was a weakness; a sense, so it seems, of failure, almost of despair. The first glance at his portrait raises the suspicion, and an incident confirms it, that when things went wrong he would go to his room and weep. Here was no man to cope with the *espièglerie* and shrewdness of Napoleon's son. Accustomed as the child was to the roar of vitality and affection that issued from his father, this pruned, thin-blooded, greyhound of a man, could have no power to mould him. The constricted look about the elongated torso in Dietrichstein's portrait, the mincing pose in the small unrelaxed hand, lack the authentic masculine. Those fingers would never break a vase, but no human comfort could flow through them. The small fluted lips proclaim the egoist. At the same time it is the face of a man who is essentially high-principled, well-intentioned, and reliable.

Even before Dietrichstein and his future pupil met, the child, sensing a new and sterner régime, felt suspicious. He had already been told he was to have a chamberlain, so when Countess Scarampi came to fetch him to meet the Count, he exclaimed, "I don't want to go to the *salon* because the chamberlain is there!" and when the diminutive figure and the grown man stood confronting each other, he "fixed me", writes Dietrichstein, "with his great eyes".

So began what was to be a lifelong tussle between middle-age and youth. At lesson-time, confronted with the stiffer substance of the masculine world, asked to produce what had never before been demanded of him, concentration, the child would dissolve into tears. Dietrichstein, who kept careful notes of these lessons, remarked that "His laziness, or, rather, his boredom, was limitless". But the question is, Was not Dietrichstein's capacity for boring limitless? An imaginative child of four, ripe only for a kindergarten, his reactions to the routine teaching of Dietrichstein and of the two tutors who worked under him are more than understandable when one hears Dietrichstein admit that they all

MAURICE, COUNT DIERCKHUSEN
From a portrait by Krichuber



three found it necessary to maintain an "almost unimpaired reputation for seriousness". Napoleon's pictured Sèvres plates and illustrated chair-backs were far more reasonable methods of imparting knowledge to an infant. This child, of whom Ménéval had said that "his gentleness, his sweetness, the vivacity of his repartees, were full of charm", would, if treated in the right manner, have responded in any way required of him.

The boy shed his own very individual charm even over his inertia, and his tutors would hear him having little monologues about the unfortunate situation, "I am thoroughly idle," they would hear him remark, or "Laziness is galloping over me. Ah ! I ought not to be like this !" On Mondays it would be, "Mondays are lazy days because I do nothing on Sunday." He would address reprimands to himself, or, if he had been specially badly behaved, would strike his own person—to the admiration of the French women who, Dietrichstein observes coldly, acclaimed it as "a sense of justice". The two sub-tutors were an Austrian officer, Captain Foresti, and Mathieu de Collin, who, in contrast to the other two men, had a noticeably timid manner. Not one of the three could manage the evasive little creature, and punishments became inevitable ; but far from showing any resentment he would merely ask if further punishment were on its way. Lessons would start off hopefully : Toto being in the room to form part of this expedition in pursuit of knowledge. The child would exclaim, "Ah ! I really am going to learn because I must become wise," but hardly were the words out of his mouth before his attention was here, there, and everywhere. But if an exasperating, there is no doubt he must have been a most engaging child with his flung-out, interrogative hand and 'little cry of '*Vrai ? vrai ?*'" It is given to few boys at the age of four to be already a deposed king and in possession of a past alive with incident, fame, and disaster. But even if we allow for this, his precociousness was at times startling. That attention which his tutors wished bestowed on his lesson-books was, they found, directed instead on themselves : their various idiosyncrasies filled him with interest, and from those Cupid-lips would issue comments in the centre of which would be a tiny prick of malice that was wholly French. As for the nervous-mannered Collin, Napoleon's son summed

him up as neatly as Napoleon himself could have done.

"Are you coming for a drive in the carriage with my mother and me?" he asked Collin one day as they came back from a walk.

"I think the Count is going with you," said Collin.

"Ah," the boy gave back, "you know I believe you won't come because my mother would think — there's a man who doesn't count."

"Bear your ills patiently, my good Collin," he admonished him another day when, in front of Foresti, Collin was trying to quell him : and again, when on some other occasion Collin was writing down a list of things the boy must read, he remarked, "How silent and quiet our Collin is when he is writing !" Another time when Dietrichstein and Collin were both annoyed with him, he took a chair, and, plumping it down in front of Collin, exclaimed, "The good Collin ! one must make friends with him." "When I am big," he told Foresti, but in quite a pleasant manner, "I shall order my good papa to put you in chains."

On the other hand there were moments when he must have been definitely appealing, times when he would ask Dietrichstein, "You are pleased with me, aren't you ? for you don't look sad," and Dietrichstein must have been painfully lacking in humour if he did not relish the remark that was one day thrown out at him : "Ah, sir, you won't make a good tutor ! Toto has told me you are going to forbid wine."

There was a little boy, Émile Gobrand, the son of Marie Louise's *valet de chambre*, who played and did lessons with the Prince, and when at night Nurse Marchand was putting his hair into forty curl-papers Émile would come to kiss hands, gabbling, "My Prince, I wish you good-night, will *votre Altesse Impériale* permit me to kiss your hand . . ." and so on and so on. After a time the Prince took it all as a joke, and would laugh out, "Listen to Émile saying his catechism !" a remark precisely in the *genre* of Napoleon. Émile was far quicker at lessons than was his royal friend, and the tutors hoped this would rouse a spirit of competition in the Prince ; but not at all : he merely sat there talking to himself, or crying, or, having been shrewd enough to discover

the strained relationship between Toto and his tutors, he would amuse himself by playing them off against each other. One day, in this way, he had a slap at Foresti. "Toto," he said, "stay till the end of the week, and then till the end of the next week, and then till the end of the world. Then Monsieur will be nicely caught!" But his dear Toto did not herself escape unscathed from that infant tongue. "Toto," he would exclaim, "I shall ask my good papa to have you shut up." "You are the worst woman in the world!" he would cry out to Nurse Marchand when she stopped him from eating something he particularly wanted; and one day as she was combing out his long curls he remarked to himself, good-humouredly, "Madame Marchand is a woman who ought never to have been placed about me." As a final cuff to the devoted creature, he told her, "There are times when I am quite alone with my dear mama, I shall make use of one of these moments to beg her to send you away." As for Émile, he turned out to be such a roaring boy, living in such a turbulence of noise, fights, breakages, quarrels, and blows that, after several months, he was removed.

Beneath this nursery-schoolroom curriculum were the most complicated under-currents. One of Dietrichstein's tasks was to turn the child from a Frenchman into a German, and with every inch of his being the boy resented this transposition. He detested even pronouncing the gutturals of the harsh language that was imposed on him. "I will not be German . . ." he cried out one day, "I will be a Frenchman." Dietrichstein made the curious concession of allowing him to address the Almighty in French. Then the three French women, Toto, her daughter Fanny, and Nurse Marchand, were still talking to him of his past: and it being a past that flattered his self-esteem he listened to it avidly. "They talked to him of nothing but Paris, of his Court, his bedroom as a child, etc.," wrote the exasperated Dietrichstein, who saw his Germanizing work perpetually undone by those feminine reactionaries. In this way, perpetually adding brighter colours to the child's earliest memories, they made them far more desirable than if he had thought of them without assistance; his departed grandeur was in this way constantly stressed, his devotion to France strengthened, and, above all, his

love for his father turned into a cult. "When I was still King" was a phrase that would often emerge in his conversation. Naturally, soon he could not distinguish between what he really remembered and what had been told him, and ended by imagining that he actually did call to mind all the vivid tapestry of the past that his governess and nurse wove for him. Dietrichstein took the line of always impressing on him that he remembered nothing; when he gave his tutors exact details of some scene or incident he would be told that he only knew it because he had been told so. One can imagine the sense of unreality and confusion this must have engendered in his four-year-old mind. Added to it was bewilderment at his changed position in life; his transportation from France to Austria; the sudden and complete disappearance of his father; this perpetual, teasing demand that he must give up being a French boy and become a German one. It is not surprising that as the weeks succeeded each other he was becoming more and more reserved. His nascent mind groped in mystery. As was to appear later, an intense longing was growing in him to get at the true facts; to know actually who he had been, and who he now was: and above all, to find out more about his father, what he had done, and in what part of the globe he was hidden. Here again Dietrichstein was up against a difficulty. The child must be taught to love his relations, but his father must scarcely be mentioned, for Marie Louise's instructions were that the more his past was left in limbo the better. Again, his Austrian grandfather was obviously one of those the child must be urged to love and admire; Emperor Francis must be uplifted before his young eyes as some sacred image to be worshipped, just as before he had been uplifted before the eyes of Marie Louise; but how talk intimately of this grandfather without impinging on that forbidden subject of conversation — Napoleon?

The child would often remark, "I know something but I don't say it, because it's a secret." When the "secret" finally came out it was usually something to do with France. His wariness with the tutors was so great that they could barely persuade him to talk to them at all, preserving, says Foresti, "a calculated dumbness which is altogether extraordinary in a child". Not only did his

tutors try to make him talk German, and view life from the German point of view, but they endeavoured to root out of the boy various little tricks which, to their surprise and concern, were exactly those of Napoleon — for instance, like his father, he constantly stood with hands clasped behind his back and one foot stuck forward.

A special irritation to Dietrichstein were the relays of people who, apparently whenever they wished, would come clambering up the royal staircase to gaze at the famous child of Europe. In fact he appears to have been one of the regular sights with which the people of Vienna would fill in a holiday afternoon. However, in time, Dietrichstein managed to get the door shut against these Viennese pilgrims. That source of annoyance at least was therefore removed, but there still remained what the tutor considered the chief menace to his own chance of success — the French women : Toto, daughter Fanny, and Nurse Marchand. And he lived in dread of failure. The eyes not only of his own friends, but of the Court of Vienna, of Europe itself, were upon him. To fail was to fail spectacularly. And he knew during these first months that he was failing. Forty years had met defeat at the hands of four. He was so tormented at this, his lack of success, that one day when the Abbé Lanti came in to see him he found him in tears. "He does not like me," Dietrichstein protested to his friend : and one cannot help suspecting an unconscious jealousy of the French trio whom he knew the boy did more than like. The determination to get rid of them came to a head ; they and their influence must, Dietrichstein decided, be "firmly and drastically eliminated". Therefore, at the end of October, two more of the child's psychological props were removed. Toto and the laughing Fanny disappeared just in the same unnerving way as had, first his father, and then Maman 'Quiou. The wrench to the child in losing Madame de Montesquiou had had such an effect on him that news of it had even reached Napoleon in the Atlantic, and soon after his arrival in St. Helena we hear him, one evening as he strolled about with Count Las Cases, referring to it, saying the shock had been so great that those around his son had been afraid it would affect his health. And now, when Toto departed, Marie Louise wrote that "countless tears were shed on

both sides at the moment of separation ". Dietrichstein, on the other hand, wrote with surprise at the child's apparent indifference at the parting. The truth is that this boy, so tender-hearted that at the sight of a dog being ill-treated he would burst into tears, was becoming an adept at hiding his feelings from the prying eyes of his tutors. If they thought him callous, that was just what he wished ; he was not going to enlighten them.

Soon after the turn of the year Nanny Marchand was sent off. Therefore, except for his mother, that feminine French atmosphere, so intimate and so gay, which had always been closely about him, had now vanished entirely.

10

Three or four months after Napoleon's escape from Elba, on the afternoon of June the 20th, Hortense was giving a literary party in the *salon* of her house in Paris. Some of her friends had been asked in to hear Benjamin Constant read his novel *Adolphe*. The era of sensibility, godfathered by Rousseau, had impregnated the Continent, and the aim of Constant was to reduce everyone in the room to tears. The crucial moment of the novel had arrived, the whole company, including Constant himself, was sobbing, when a message came to Hortense that the Duc de Rovigo had arrived and wished to speak to her. He told her of the defeat of Napoleon's army near a Belgian village of which she had probably never heard, Waterloo. By now Hortense was inured to disaster, undismayed by the jerks of Fortune's wheel. "I soon recovered from the sensations given by this final blow . . . the more overwhelming it was, so much the more was energy required." She heard that Napoleon was arriving in Paris that night. The next evening she went to the Élysée palace to see him, and no account shows more convincingly than does hers Napoleon's sense of complete stupefaction at what had happened to him. She found him in the garden alone. "I went up to him overcome with emotion. I don't know if he wanted to hide what he must have been feeling himself, but he asked me with an air of surprise : ' Then what have they been telling you ? '

" ' That you have been unfortunate, Sire, ' I replied. He was

silent for several moments, went into his study, and asked me to come too. He seemed overcome with exhaustion and cogitation. He sat himself down at his writing-table, broke the seals of a packet of letters, did not read them, and it was only when they came to tell him that dinner was served that he seemed to realize I was there.

“‘Probably you’ve already had dinner,’ he said. ‘Will you keep me company?’ I followed him, and during his dinner he only made a few insignificant remarks. He seemed lost in thought. He went back to the *salon*, where his mother and brothers came in, went with them into the garden, and I left them.”

For about a week Hortense went every day to the Élysée palace. One evening Napoleon came up to her. “La Malmaison belongs to you,” he remarked. “I should very much like to go there, and it will give me great pleasure if you will stay there with me. I shall go tomorrow — but I do not want to be put in the Empress’s room.”

But his mind, now that he realized Marie Louise would never return to him, was pervaded with the thought of Josephine. While he had been making the military preparations that ended in Waterloo he one day began talking with renewed interest to Hortense of her mother, and finished by saying, “I haven’t got any portrait of the Empress Josephine. I should be so pleased if you would give me one.” In consequence she gave him a porcelain cup on which was painted a portrait of Josephine by Quaglia.

The morning after Napoleon had said he wished to go to la Malmaison, Hortense went on ahead to make preparations. Later in the day Napoleon himself arrived, and at eleven next morning Hortense got a message saying he would like to see her. “He was”, she says, “walking alone in the garden : the weather was superb ; he asked me how I was, what I had done during the evening, did not wait for a reply, and with a touching expression, said, ‘That poor Josephine ! I can’t get accustomed to being in this place without her ! I seem to keep on seeing her coming out of one of the paths and picking these flowers that she loved so ! Poor Josephine !’ Then seeing how he had upset Hortense, he

added, ' *Au reste*, she would have been very unhappy now. We never quarrelled but over one subject — her debts, and about them I scolded her a good deal. I have never seen anyone so full of grace as she was. She was a woman in the fullest sense of the term, variable, lively, and with the best of hearts.' And then, in spite of the cup with Josephine's portrait that Hortense had already given him, he added, ' Have another portrait of her done for me ; I would like it to be in a locket.' "

Napoleon was at la Malmaison for four days. " We were ", says Hortense, " ceaselessly on the *qui vive*. . . . All the same my fears for the Emperor were a little assuaged when I heard that two frigates were waiting for him at the port of la Rochelle." She goes on to say, " At midday one day the Emperor sent to find me. He was in his little garden with a man whom I did not know, and a young child who looked about nine or ten. Taking me aside, the Emperor said, ' Hortense, look at this child : whom is he like ? '

" ' Your son, Sire ; he is the image of the King of Rome.' "

" ' You think so ? Then it must be so. The sight of him has moved me — I who did not think I had a tender heart ! You seem to know about his birth. How did you find out ? '

" ' Sir, people in general have talked about it a great deal, and this likeness proves they were not mistaken.' "

" ' I admit I doubted for a long time if he was my son. All the same I had him brought up at a school in Paris. . . . ' "

" Then he rejoined the gentleman who was waiting further on. I went up to this child, beautiful as an angel. I asked him if he was happy at school, and how he amused himself ; he said that for some time he and his comrades had been playing at fighting, and that they made two parties : one called Bonapartists, and the other, Bourbonists."

Hortense asked him which party he belonged to. " The King's," said the boy.

She asked him why. " Because I like the King, and don't like the Emperor."

Hortense remarks that the situation was indeed bizarre. She put a final question : what was the reason he did not like the

¹ This child was Comte Léon, son of Elénore Deuvelle de la Plaigne.

Emperor ? " I have no reason," replied the dreadful child, " except that I belong to the King's party."

Then Napoleon came up, dismissed the man and the boy, and he and Hortense went in to *déjeuner*. During the meal, says Hortense, Napoleon talked of nothing but the child.

" What I've seen has moved me ; he resembles my son. I did not believe myself susceptible to the emotion he has roused in me. Then you were struck with his likeness to my son and myself ?" . . . and so on continuously : for it is noticeable that Napoleon, when deeply moved, always wished to confide his emotions to some patient female ear.

On the Emperor's last evening Hortense and Madame Bertrand were strolling about the garden. " The weather ", writes Hortense, " was superb, and the peacefulness around us in striking contrast to the uneasiness we were feeling, but it would have been difficult to breathe such pure air, to have before one's eyes such enchanting scenes, and not to forget the unhappiness close to us." The two women had been for some time sitting silently together on a garden bench when they saw Napoleon coming towards them. Hortense noticed that he too seemed to be touched by this tender hour of the summer evening that was prevailing the whole garden like a benediction, and as he sat down beside them he exclaimed, " How beautiful la Malmaison is ! Wouldn't it be pleasant, Hortense, if we could stay here ! " A banal enough remark, but in this case so implicit with sadness, with the sense of finality that, among all his brilliant utterances, this ordinary little sentence stands out strangely poignant. He had only reached the afternoon of his life but he realized now that nevertheless he was at its end ; some premonition perhaps warned him that he would never under any circumstances return to that country of France which now so coursed in his blood that to leave it and set sail for America was to say good-bye to himself. And this la Malmaison, now umbrageous with June, cradled in all the softness of summer, this place that had seen him in his young-giant days when he would whistle as he worked, this garden impregnated with Josephine, this whole scene that had been as it were the inmost heart of his life in France — this, as all else, had tomorrow to be left for ever. So now : " How beautiful la Malmaison is !

Wouldn't it be pleasant, Hortense, if we could stay here ? ”

“ I could not reply, ” writes Hortense ; “ my voice would have betrayed all my emotion. ”

Every hour Hortense, having heard of the near approach of the Prussians, was in trepidation that if her stepfather did not hurry away from la Malmaison he would be taken prisoner. She longed for him to set out for Rochefort to join the two frigates reserved for him by the provisional government to take him to America. But neither she nor those round him guessed at the scheme that was maturing in his mind.

On the morning of the 29th those asleep in the château were suddenly awakened by shouts of “ *Vive l'Empereur ! à bas les Bourbons ! à bas les traîtres !* ” These shouts came from a division of soldiers under General Bayer on their way back from la Vendée. They had stopped at the gates of la Malmaison, refusing to go further, and were now shouting out that they wanted the Emperor to come and put himself at their head.

General Montholon was that day on duty, and was hurrying to find Napoleon, when he suddenly caught sight of him sitting in the library window, his feet propped up on the sill. When Montholon got up to him he saw that he was reading Montaigne. General Bayer was brought in, and a quarter of an hour later the division was on its way to Paris still shouting *Vive l'Empereur !*

Later that day Napoleon sent for General Becker, in command of the guard at la Malmaison, and told him that he had delayed his departure for several hours so as to submit a new proposition to the Government — that in the name of Napoleon II he should reassume the command of the army. It was not, he explained to Becker, as Emperor but as General that he solicited it. The enemy once repulsed, he gave his word he would then go to America, “ there to accomplish his destiny ”.

Becker set off for Paris with this offer. It was flatly refused, and Napoleon was urged to set off “ without delay, seeing that the Prussians are marching on Versailles ”. Becker brought back the answer to la Malmaison. Napoleon listened to what he said in silence ; then remarked, “ They will regret it ! ” and, with an assumed air of indifference, ordered preparations to be made for

his departure. It was now about five o'clock. An hour later all the servants were collecting in the garden to catch a sight of him for the last time. At the park gate a calash with four horses was waiting.

In a room inside the house Hortense had been urging Napoleon to take her diamonds with him, and anything else she had of value. He demurred ; but finally accepted the diamonds, she sewing them inside a black silk ribbon which with her help he then fastened round him beneath his waistcoat. ("Never", says Montholon of Hortense at this juncture, "was seen more complete abnegation of all considerations of self-interest.")

Then the figures waiting among the long evening shadows in the garden saw him coming out. The expression of his face, it was noticed, was not only calm, it was serene. He wore sky-blue pantaloons half hidden by a long green overcoat. He passed through the sobbing servants, walked on till he came to the gate where the calash waited, then got in hurriedly. The Grand Marshal Bertrand followed and sat down by his side. The Duc de Rovigo and Becker put themselves opposite, and a young officer, General Gourgaud, clambered onto the box. Whatever good-byes may have been said as Napoleon walked to the gate, now when he was actually going it seemed to the surrounding group a moment when no words were adequate : "the carriage went off in the midst of a profound silence". And one cannot but think that the men and women who stood there in the garden watching it disappear must have waited till the sounds of those galloping hoofs, becoming ever fainter and fainter, were a dying reverberation more in the mind than in the ear.

ST. HELENA

IN the nineteenth century it was the fashion for an autobiographer to apologize to his readers for venturing to draw attention to himself, and when in the 'forties a certain Mrs. Abell set out to record her early days at St. Helena it was only with many an apologetic curtsy, with, as she says, "timidity and hesitation", that she faced her public. But she need not have apologized. Most enchantingly she again brings into being her childhood home, The Briars : we see the long cottage front with its shuttered windows and surrounding verandah ; most seductively there floats around us the smell of myrtle groves and syringa ; amid all the exuberance of tropical foliage there gleam citrons, oranges, grapes, guavas, and mangoes. But what is of the greatest interest is that she reveals to us a certain and most unexpected attitude of mind in Napoleon on his arrival at St. Helena : an attitude which, without her record, would have remained unknown.

The writer was in 1815 an extremely gay little person of fifteen called Betsy Balcombe. Her father acted as a general purveyor ; but, practical as was Mr. Balcombe's occupation, there floated about him a mystery. Though ostensibly the son of the landlord of the New Ship Inn at Brighton, it was rumoured that, actually, his father was the Prince Regent. Whether of royal blood or not, Betsy was uneducated in almost everything except how to be happy. She could, however, chatter a certain amount in French, and to this, her one rather wobbly accomplishment, she owes the small pedestal of fame on which she stands. To the mind of her and her one-year-older sister, Jenny, Napoleon was the Monster of Europe, and they, and in fact all the islanders, were unpleasantly startled when, one day in October 1815, the news came to them that he was actually coming to live among them. Nevertheless she and her sister were agog to see the arrival of the captured beast.

Napoleon was not going to land till the evening, and it was

all but dark when Betsy and her family reached the landing-stage in Jamestown. They found themselves in the midst of a vast crowd ; there appeared in fact to be more people than they had thought the island contained. A little way out to sea loomed the great hulk of the *Northumberland*. Everyone waited. Then a boat was seen drawing in to where they stood. Three male figures stepped out and came walking along between the two hedges of staring people. Admiral Cockburn of the *Northumberland* was on one side of Napoleon ; General Bertrand on the other. They walked along through a tense, complete silence. Straining her eyes through the darkness, the child could just discern the short central figure ; he wore a grey overcoat hanging open, and now and again she saw the glint of a diamond star on his chest. She tried all she could to make out his features, but the dimness hid them. Further on, the pressure of the people became so overwhelming that only with difficulty a way for Napoleon could be forced through. To be glared at by these thousands of eyes without a sound, without a syllable of greeting or welcome, instantly put him into one of his tempers ; and he said afterwards how he detested being stared at, "*comme une bête féroce*".

The next morning, looking out of their window, the Balcombes saw in the distance five men on horseback going along the mountain path. All the Balcombe eyes were fixed on this moving group, trying to discover if Napoleon were among them ; but so bewildering was the way the figures passed from dazzling sunlight into shadow, so black was the mountain behind them, that it was difficult to make out anything clearly. " Sometimes we only saw a single white plume or the glitter of a weapon in the sun." Actually, Napoleon was one of the group ; he was riding out from Jamestown to have a look at Longwood, which, not yet ready for him, was hastily being put into a state of repair.

At five o'clock the same afternoon the Balcombes saw the riders reappear, and they not only recognized Napoleon but realized that he and his companions were making straight for their cottage. Betsy decided at once to go into hiding till they had gone, but her mother told her to stay where she was and, she being the only member of the family who could talk French, Mrs. Balcombe adjured her to try and remember what she knew of it.

At the gate all the horsemen dismounted except Napoleon, who rode up to the house across the lawn. Scared though the child was, she noticed that the Emperor was in a green uniform, his chest a mass of orders ; that he was seated on a superb coal-black horse with crimson-velvet harness embroidered in gold. She also noticed how his horse's hoofs were cutting up the turf of their lawn. As before, when Napoleon had landed, Sir George Cockburn walked on foot on one side of him, and General Bertrand on the other. Napoleon dismounted, and they all came into the cottage, Napoleon "deadly pale . . . cold and immovable", but, goes on Mrs. Abell, "once he began to speak, his fascinating smile and kind manner removed any vestige of my fear. . . ." In arriving at The Briars Napoleon discovered two things of value ; a place so umbrageous, so soothingly cooled by the down-rush of a cascade close by that it seemed wholly delectable : and a hostess whose likeness to Josephine was startling. He announced that, instead of going back to Jamestown, he wished to stay where he was till Longwood was ready. Cockburn, all eagerness to please him, arranged he should occupy the pavilion in the garden. Meanwhile, the Emperor, having asked for some chairs to be put out on the lawn, sat down on one, and told Betsy to sit on another.

"You speak French," remarked Napoleon : and he started off on a *viva voce* examination. "What is the capital of France ?"

"Paris."

"Of Italy ?"

"Rome."

"Of Russia ?"

"Petersburg now . . . and Moscow formerly."

"On my saying this", writes Mrs. Abell, "he turned abruptly, and, fixing me with his piercing eyes, he demanded sternly, 'Who burnt it ?'"

This so disconcerted the child that she could not utter a word. Napoleon repeated the question. "I stammered, 'I do not know, Sir.'"

"'Oui, oui,' he replied, laughing violently, 'it was I who burnt it.'"

This laughter encouraged her to bring out, "I believe, Sir, the Russians burnt it to get rid of the French."

On this the Emperor laughed again. At such hilarity issuing from the little figure on the chair, his protruding white-waist-coated stomach shaking with amusement, all his imperial and monster aspect fell from him, and on the instant he became to Mr. Balcombe's daughter merely a delightful joke, a bizarre adjunct bestowed by Providence for the further enhancement of her and Jenny's already extremely joyous existence.

In the evening Betsy sang to him *Ye banks and braes*, herself striking off the accompaniment on the piano; and when he said "it was the prettiest English air he had ever heard", she had no hesitation in pointing out to him that it was not English but Scottish. He then began to hum *Vive Henri Quatre*, "became abstracted, and leaving his seat, marched round the room, keeping time to the song he was singing". When he had finished he asked her how she liked it. She told him, not at all.

2

Among Napoleon's diminished Court consisting of four men only who had come with him to St. Helena, was a little man even shorter than himself, the Comte de Las Cases.¹ This small, now famous, companion of the Emperor was a relic of the old French aristocracy. During the Revolution he became an *émigré*: then he sailed for England, gave lessons, was at grips with poverty, and finally, by publishing an *Historical Atlas*, successfully filled his pockets. He returned to France, became a Chamberlain at Napoleon's Court and a Councillor of State. "From the London pavement", he remarked one day to Napoleon at St. Helena, "I rose to the steps of your throne, to the seats of your council." This luscious style of conversation, which might well have irritated another man, pleased Napoleon, for it was much in his own manner. If Las Cases had his moments of verbal extravagance,

¹ Napoleon's Court at St. Helena consisted of his Grand Marshal, Comte Bertrand; Comte de Las Cases, and Comte de Montholon, who acted as Chamberlains; and Baron Gourgaud, who was given charge of the stables. Bertrand and Montholon had their wives and children with them; Las Cases had his son; Gourgaud was unmarried.

his mind was at the same time original, supple, and vivacious : though middle-aged he was still full of wonder and excitement over life. He was romantic, impressionable, a vehement hero-worshipper, and in following Napoleon to his South Atlantic island his nature received the richest aliment. How much, in forming one of the party of exiles, self-interest was at work is a problem which no writer on the St. Helena episode has ever succeeded in solving. With him had come his son of fourteen, Emanuel, to act as page to Napoleon. To Emanuel the Emperor was a god.

The same day on which Napoleon established himself at The Briars he sent to Jamestown for Las Cases and his son to come and join him. As they climbed the road that twisted round the hill on which stood the Balcombes' house, Las Cases saw far off the solitary figure of a man standing in the doorway of the pavilion, looking out at the view. "It was", writes Las Cases, "undoubtedly he ; a little bent forward, hands behind his back, that uniform so spruce and simple, that well-known little hat ! When I came up to him he was standing in the doorway whistling a tune from the Vaudeville."

"Ah ! there you are !" exclaimed Napoleon, and took him inside.

Las Cases, all out for grandeur, was shocked at what he saw. The ground-floor room "without curtains, without shutters, scarcely a chair". Napoleon wished to walk about. "He took my arm", writes Las Cases, "and began talking gaily. . . . Meanwhile, night was coming on, it was profoundly still, there was complete solitude. What a crowd of sensations and feelings assailed me at that moment ! There I was alone, having a tête-à-tête in the desert, almost familiarly, with him who had governed the world ! in fact, with Napoleon !!! All that passed through my mind ! . . . All that I experienced ! . . . But, to understand it fully, one would have, perhaps, to turn back to the time when he was all-powerful : to the time when one of his decrees alone would overthrow thrones or create kings ! One would have to enter into the emotion with which he imbued everyone who surrounded him at the Tuileries : the timid embarrassment, the profound respect with which his ministers, his officers, approached

him ; the anxiety, the fear, felt by ambassadors, princes, and even kings ! Now, at this moment, nothing of that attitude had so far changed in my own mind ! ”

When the time came to go to bed, Las Cases went up to the top room, “ precisely above that of the Emperor, a space seven foot square where there was nothing but a bed, without a single chair ; that was where my lodging was, and my son’s, who had to have a mattress on the floor. Could we complain ? we were so close to the Emperor that from there we could hear the sound of his voice, even his words ! ! ! . . . His chamber-valets lay on the ground across his door, wrapped in their cloaks. This is the literal description of Napoleon’s first night at The Briars.”

3

After leaving la Malmaison *en route* for America, Napoleon arriving at Rochefort had found that route blocked by British cruisers : added to this, the French provisional government demanded his departure from French soil within twenty-four hours. He realized his only course was to give himself up to the English, which he did ; and was brought to Portsmouth on the *Bellerophon*, commanded by Captain Maitland. When leaving Rochefort he had conceived the idea of approaching one of our cruisers, crying out as he came alongside, “ Like Themistocles, not wishing to take part in the mutilation of my country, I come to ask refuge with you.” Actually, this reference to the great Athenian was most unfelicitous, as Themistocles, who had intrigued with Persia against Athens, had, when he finally fled to Persia, been received with enthusiasm only because of his having been a traitor to his country. But, no doubt forgetful of these details, Napoleon clung to the Themistocles analogy, and though he gave up the more spectacular scheme he worked the same idea into a letter he dictated to the Prince Regent : “ Royal Highness, exposed to the factions which are dividing my country, and to the enmity of the greatest powers of Europe, I have consummated my political career. I come, like Themistocles, to throw myself on the hospitality of the British people : I put myself under the protection of their laws, which I claim from

your Royal Highness, as the most powerful, the most constant, the most generous of my enemies."

Certain Englishmen, from a literary point of view, admired the diction of his appeal. Its phraseology had the fashionable ring of the moment; but it is extraordinary that Napoleon, intuitive psychologist and most practical of statesmen, should have imagined that such histrionic bluff would have the least operative effect on the minds of either the Regent or his ministers.

In England it has become a national custom to blush at the mention of St. Helena. Napoleon never conquered our country, but we have allowed him to conquer our conscience. We have, in fact, fallen into the precise trap which he spent his five and a half years on the island in fabricating. His intention was to excite commiseration for himself in the hope that the Government Opposition would attack the Ministry; and, equally, that if the Opposition should come into power, they would release him. That this was the basis of Longwood politics is clearly voiced by Las Cases in a passage that he thought it wiser to delete when he published his *Journal*, but which Sir Hudson Lowe had already copied out of the manuscript when the *Journal* passed through his hands in 1816. "We are possessed", wrote Las Cases, "of moral arms only: and in order to make the most advantageous use of these it was necessary to reduce into a *system* our demeanour, our words, our sentiments, *even our privations*, in order that we might thereby excite a lively interest in a large portion of the population of Europe, and that the Opposition in England might not fail to attack the Ministry on the violence of their conduct towards us."

Napoleon's pretence that he came to England as a guest, when, actually, he came because he had no other choice, was merely part of his usual chicanery. His self-admiration had now reached the point that he considered it was his due to be treated as a sacred being. One day at The Briars, recapitulating to his suite what he considered all the injuries inflicted on him, he exclaimed, "How can the sovereigns of Europe permit the sacred quality of sovereignty to be polluted in my person?" After causing England long years of bloodshed, after adding £600,000,000 to our National Debt, and, at the break-up of the Peace of Amiens,

detaining ten thousand English men and women in France for ten years, he yet seems genuinely to have considered that in coming to our shores he was bestowing himself on us as a kind of belated Valentine.

On the voyage out on the *Northumberland* Napoleon had responded to all Admiral Cockburn's efforts at kindness with deliberate churlishness. The first evening at dinner Cockburn had pressed various dishes on his captive, "but", says Las Cases, and he says it with satisfaction, "the Emperor's bare refusal and the manner with which it was expressed was enough to stop his doing it again". Out of deference to him, conversation at dinner was invariably in French, but Napoleon, aloof and sulking, refused to take any part in it except occasionally to shoot out a question on some technical subject that had happened to catch his interest. Accustomed to spend only about a quarter of an hour at his own meals, he was consumedly bored at this naval dinner of over an hour, and on the first evening, at the end of the meal, instead of waiting for the ensuing hour of drink and gossip with the other men, he abruptly got up and walked away without a word of excuse. And his abruptness in getting up from a meal was, says an onlooker, as if he had received an electric shock. Even the Admiral's suavity was momentarily shaken and he was heard to remark, "I believe the General has never read Lord Chesterfield." Probably the axiom of that suave peer which crossed the Admiral's mind was, "When you cannot strike, smile". But seated at the table was the irrepressible Madame Bertrand, and she at once retorted with, "Sir, the greatest sovereigns in Europe have thought it an honour to dine with the Emperor Napoleon."

Cockburn might have replied that it was a pity the companionship of kings had not taught Napoleon manners, but he merely answered, "That is true!" and in future had dinner pushed through as rapidly as possible, and before the moment came for coffee, had Napoleon's specially brought to him. When, later, Cockburn wrote an account of the voyage, he said of Napoleon, "I cannot but remark that his general manners . . . were uncouth and disagreeable, and to his *French friends* most overbearing, if not absolutely rude". At meals, too, he would constantly make snatches at his fish or meat with his fingers.

In spite of all the solicitude for his prisoner, which the Admiral continued at St. Helena — where for the present he was responsible for Napoleon's security — there soon uprose from the French group countless cries of protest and indignation. The disagreeablenesses that are inevitable on arrival in a strange place were all attributed by them to deliberate malignity on the part of the British Government. The climate, the coffee, the sentinels, the difference between the food at St. Helena and that of Paris, there being rocks where there ought to have been trees, there being no curtains or shutters in Napoleon's pavilion, his servants having had their fire-arms confiscated — all this Las Cases and his colleagues called on Heaven to take note of. They were referred to by them as "the horrors and miseries of our exile", and by Napoleon himself as "the agonies of death".

Actually, all that could be done by way of improvement was done : the coffee became so excellent that Napoleon patted his stomach in approbation ; the sentinel who lurked in the avenue was removed ; the Admiral gave a ball and invited the French suite to attend. But it was all no good : the exiles were not to be deflected from their cries and complaints. Napoleon, when he received his own card of invitation to the Admiral's ball and noticed it was addressed to "General Bonaparte", remarked to Bertrand : "Send this card to General Bonaparte ; the last I heard of him was at the Pyramids. . . ."

At the end of October a Captain Desmond commanding one of the escort of the *Northumberland* was returning to England, and came to The Briars to ask if he could act in any way as messenger for Napoleon. The Emperor gave him "a kind of note" to take with him in which, in two sentences, was set out what was, and was to remain, the underlying cause of irritation in the St. Helena situation. Writing in the third person, Napoleon protested that "the Government has declared him a prisoner of war. The Emperor is definitely not a prisoner of war."

While at The Briars Napoleon continued to dictate to Las Cases the account of his campaigns which had helped to get through the monotonous hours on board the *Northumberland* during his three months' voyage out. It had been when he was

still on the *Bellerophon* in Plymouth Harbour waiting to set out for St. Helena that the idea of dictating his campaigns to Las Cases had arisen. Napoleon had sent for him one evening to come to his cabin, and had been questioning him as to whether "it would be possible to endure life there". "But", Napoleon suddenly threw off, "is it certain I shall go there?" and he began to voice his views on suicide — that it was not against his principles; and arguing, with ingenious sophistry, that the Almighty could not blame him for merely wishing to return to Him sooner.

Las Cases cried out at this, saying "it was a sight worthy of the Gods to see a man struggling with misfortune", and that reverses and endurance had their own "halo of glory".

Napoleon seemed struck by this. "There is something in that point of view," he admitted, "but what can we do in that forlorn place?"

"Sire," replied Las Cases, who was certainly admirably adroit in his answers, "we will live in the past — there is surely enough there to satisfy us! Do we not enjoy the Lives of Caesar and of Alexander? We will have a still better: you will, Sire, re-read yourself!"

No suggestion could have been more apropos, more flatteringly tactful. In a moment, says Las Cases, Napoleon's whole air and manner changed, for, even as the words were said, he grasped the possibilities they opened up. Here was egress for his still vigorous impulse to create! Just as before he had built up the Napoleonic empire, so now he would build up the Napoleonic legend. He would relive in the imagination of the world. In the past he had dealt with the palpable; the time had come to manipulate the impalpable: he would display himself, refurbish himself, in such a manner as to seduce the universe. His depression dissipated, "at ease and even cheerful", he passed on to other topics.

While during the early autumn months the *Northumberland*, to which Napoleon had been transferred, went straining and creaking her way ever southwards, he each day dictated an account of his campaigns to the enthusiastic Las Cases. Enthusiasm on the part of the amanuensis was necessary, as Napoleon, talking rapidly, flung out everything pell-mell, refusing even to repeat any of the

words that Las Cases had not happened to catch as they came whirring towards him. The Emperor gave these dictations in his own cabin, walking ceaselessly to and fro, all but naked on account of the heat. When evening began to cool the air he would go up on deck, where, standing on the bridge, or propped against a cannon, he would deluge Las Cases with a spate of reminiscences. Las Cases, not so well-informed as to the details of his past as we are, was not in a position to realize, as regards Napoleon's general remarks on his life, what shrewd little touches and pushes he gave to certain incidents, thus invariably placing the first Emperor of the French in the most gratifying position.

Less strenuous than the morning's perspiring efforts in the cabin, this evening scene rises before our eyes : the two conversing figures diminished in size by the mounting tiers of the canopy of sails above them, now gleaming whitely in the evening sun-glow ; the low light glistening along the planks of the deck, making a dazzlement, here of a brass knob, there of the muzzle of a cannon ; the sound of the high-up air perpetually drubbing against straining canvas ; the recurrent knocking of rope or beam ; the passing figures of barefooted sailors soundlessly padding about within the soft enfoldment of evening light. At six o'clock a whistle would suddenly shrill, and the next instant the deck would be swarming with every seaman on board tearing to the sides of the ship where their hammocks had been hanging since early morning. Those who were not quick enough in taking down their hammock got punished, and for a few moments there would be a rough scrimmage. But at the sound of the whistle there would too have rushed on deck a bunch of little midshipmen. Napoleon, at first figuring in their minds as a captured devil, had now become to them a treasured hero whom they were proud to have on board, who must at all costs be protected from anything unpleasant ; so now they would place themselves round him in a circle to save him from getting jostled, at the same time shouting out to the sailors to keep their distance ; and Napoleon, hemmed in by those breathless eager faces, would remark complacently that it is always the young who are the most quickly touched by enthusiasm.

But this voyage, never-ending as it had seemed while it

lasted, had already slid back into the past, and Napoleon is now before us in his garden pavilion at The Briars. Hardly had he become accustomed to this exiguous lodging when he was confronted with an enemy quite new to him, in this case not a member of the European coalition but an element of being : Time. During the greater part of his life his difficulty had been to find enough of it, to stretch out the daily portion sufficiently to cover his multitudinous activities : now his constant effort was to telescope it up, to become indifferent to its horrible insistence. It was, he found, only possible to overcome it by a perpetual manœuvre of evasion, by cutting the day up carefully into short lengths made by alternating work, meals, chess, and walks and talks with Las Cases. Napoleon found it was not safe to get up and dress till about four o'clock, to get up earlier made the day " too long and too disconnected ". The long dawdling evenings when the day which he had done with would not go away, and the night which he ached for would not arrive, were the worst of all. Up and down, up and down, then turn and back again he and Las Cases would go till the moon shone out, throwing its theatrical light on the two sauntering vociferating figures. One solace Napoleon did have, Las Cases always at his elbow, delightedly snatching up the slightest reminiscence tossed to him. It was at this end-of-the-day hour that the idea of his completely empty future most pressed upon Napoleon ; and one evening he told Las Cases " that sometimes he could not look forward without a sense of horror to the great number of years he might still have to encounter, as well as to the uselessness of a drawn-out old age ". Talking . . . talking . . . incessantly talking, Napoleon would desperately try to eat up the minutes. " After several broken-off and desultory conversations," writes Las Cases of one of these evenings, " he looked at his watch, and was quite delighted to find that he had got to half-past ten " ; and another evening, on going back to the house, " it was past midnight ", writes Las Cases ; " it was a real victory to have attained such a late hour ".

Las Cases says that Napoleon's chief, in fact almost his sole, topic during these walks was his own childhood. Now that the whole edifice of his life had crashed about his ears, it was

only in the recollection of those early days that he could regain any sense of stability. The vital, if *bourgeois*, family at The Briars set amid the hills of St. Helena probably touched him as a reminiscent echo, a kind of duplicate, of his boyhood's home among the hills of Corsica ; and, interwoven with the incidents recorded by Las Cases, there was what the disapproving Chamberlain barely recorded, perpetual badinage going on between Napoleon and Betsy Balcombe.

"His spirits were very good", writes Mrs. Abell, looking back through the long perspective of the years, "and he was at times almost boyish in his love of fun." He grew so fond of the two small Balcombe boys who completed the family that when they sat on his knee and played with his orders he would have them cut off for their amusement. In his fooleries with Betsy he would insist on the reluctant and rather solemn Las Cases's son Emanuel playing a part, pretending, to the boy's white indignation, that he was an admirer of this pretty-faced young hoyden. As for that young woman herself, the more impertinent she became the more delighted Napoleon was. If she tried to clamp her naturalness into a respectful attitude it would be, "*Eh bien, qu'as-tu Mademoiselle Betsee ?* Has the little Las Cases proved inconstant ? If he has — bring him to me."

In fact, says Mrs. Abell, in spite of her elders' admonitions to treat Napoleon with more respect, everything was "put to flight the moment I came within the influence of his arch smile and laugh". We see Napoleon correcting the child's daily French translation, and when one morning he asked for it and found she had not even begun it, snatching up the empty sheet and going across the lawn to her father just mounting his horse, crying out as he held it up, "Balcombe, here is Mademoiselle Betsee's exercise. How hard she has worked !" That evening Napoleon happened to show the child a magnificent sword. The morning's incident rankling in her mind, she asked to look at it more closely. Once it was in her hand, she exultingly lunged at Napoleon, crying out that she was going to kill him. "I fairly pinned him up in the corner . . . keeping the Emperor at bay until my arm dropped from sheer exhaustion." Was Napoleon annoyed ? He was not. It is quite evident he did not play with Mademoiselle

Betsee to please her but to please himself. He exactly expressed what he felt about all this Balcombe harlequinade when, one day as he and Las Cases left the cottage, he exclaimed, "We are coming away from a *bal masqué* !"

One evening the Emperor was playing cards at The Briars. Betsy accused him, and accused him with reason, of cheating. She was going to her first ball next day and, before the game started, had brought down her new dress to show it to Napoleon. While they played cards, this delicate frippery prinked with white roses lay on the sofa where she had thrown it. Now, accused of cheating, Napoleon snatched up the dress and ran off with it, Betsy pursuing, to the pavilion. Once there he locked himself in, and the more she entreated the more she heard him laughing inside. From this kind of teasing he drew half sadistic, half affectionate amusement. Later, he sent word to the cottage that he had decided to keep the dress, and therefore she must make up her mind not to go to the ball. During the night Betsy wept. The next day there was not a sign of the dress. Desperate, she kept sending messages to the pavilion, only to be told the Emperor could not be disturbed. "At last the hour arrived for our departure for the valley. The horses were brought round, and I saw the little black boys ready to start with our tin cases, without, alas ! my beautiful dress being in them. I was in despair, and hesitated whether I would not go in my plain frock rather than not go at all, when . . . I saw the Emperor running down the lawn to the gate with my dress. 'Here, Miss Betsee, I have brought your dress ; I hope you are a good girl now, and that you will like the ball.'"

She had been terrified that in all this scrambling about with her frock the roses would have got battered, but Napoleon had not overlooked that detail. "He said he had ordered them to be arranged and pulled out in case any might have been crushed."

As for Mrs. Balcombe, her resemblance to Josephine was so remarkable that, writes Mrs. Abell, "he has often looked at my mother for a length of time very earnestly and then apologized, saying that she reminded him so much of Josephine". The memory of Josephine, Mrs. Abell goes on, "appeared to be idolized by him . . . he was never weary of dwelling on her

sweetness of disposition and the grace of her movements. He said she was the most truly feminine woman he had ever known . . . the most amiable, elegant, charming, and affable woman in the world . . . and, moreover, she was so humane, and was the *best* of women." Of Marie Louise he spoke in a comparatively minor key though "with great kindness and affection", saying "she was an amiable creature and a very good wife".

It might have been thought that during this half-picnicking life in The Briars pavilion Napoleon's cook, Monsieur Pieron, would not embark on his more complicated *tours de force* of pâtisserie, but every day in the centre of the imperial table would be displayed some enchanting fantasy in the way of "spun sugar; and triumphal arches, and amber palaces glittering with prismatic tints that looked as if they had been built for the queen of the fairies. . . . Napoleon often sent us in some of the prettiest of these architectural delicacies." On New Year's day the Emperor, saying he was sending "his Cupidons to the Graces", despatched General Bertrand's and General Montholon's little boys to the cottage with some of Monsieur Pieron's bonbons. These bonbons were placed in crystal baskets covered with white satin napkins, each standing on a Sèvres plate: the plate forming part of the present. "Napoleon delighted in sending these little presents to ladies."

4

The 10th December was the day arranged for Napoleon to go to Longwood, it now having been made what Cockburn considered fit for him to live in, and at two o'clock that afternoon the Admiral arrived at The Briars. By now Napoleon and the various members of his suite had, as we have seen, scraped up a number of petty grievances against that most considerate and long-suffering of sailors. The situation being already in this inflamed condition, and Napoleon having lately refused even to receive Cockburn, it is not surprising to read that, when about two o'clock on the day he was to leave The Briars for Longwood the Admiral was announced, he "came forward with a certain embarrassment". But Napoleon was aware that his entrance into Longwood was to be made the occasion for a military ceremony;

aware that here was his last opportunity for being the central figure in public. And in this public installation, the Admiral as his *vis-à-vis* was a necessity. No Admiral : no ceremony. In consequence the Emperor was for the moment all smiles and agreeableness, treating Cockburn "as if they had met the evening before".

Betsy, seeing her amusing friend about to go off, was in tears. "You must not cry, Mademoiselle Betsee ; you must come and see me next week, and very often." Then, hearing that her mother was ill and in bed, "I will go and see her," he exclaimed, "and upstairs he darted . . . seated himself on the bed, and expressed his regrets".

Napoleon, in his uniform of the *Chasseurs de la Garde*, now mounted his horse. "That day his charm and good-humour were particularly noticeable", writes Las Cases ; while the Admiral, on his side, "was prodigal with his attentions". Several English officers had come to act as escort, and now the whole party set out on their two hours' ride, the French approvingly noting the large number of people on the road come to see the great captive ride by.

Longwood had originally been a farm, but had been given to the under-governor of the island as a country house. The last fact in itself presupposes that it was not entirely lacking in charm, and Las Cases, who only grudgingly admits praise for anything British, admits that with its vast view of sea, rocks, valleys, and mountains, anyone after being bored by a long sea voyage might, "if he found himself transported there on a fine day, struck with the bizarre sights suddenly offered to his vision, even cry out, "How beautiful it is !'" Cockburn's sailors had been for two months hurriedly enlarging the house, and bringing up pieces of furniture on their backs from Jamestown. The house was now a conglomeration of medium-sized rooms opening out of each other or onto the garden. A special room had been built by Cockburn as bathroom for Napoleon ; another had been arranged for his books and maps ; and a long drawing-room had been added on with windows along each side, and a verandah at the end with a flight of steps beneath a high Moorish arch. Here on these steps, within the flung shadow of the arch, the Longwood

group were often to sit in desultory talk. This additional room, however, was built of wood, and Las Cases complains that in the evening it was too much baked by the sun to sit in, though at the same time he protests that the sun hardly ever shone. Summing up the climate generally, he says the temperature was always "moderate, monotonous, presenting, however, perhaps, more ennui than unhealthiness". Later, even Napoleon himself said that he was better off at St. Helena than at Elba. One drawback Longwood did have, and that was that most, though not all, of the trees were gumwood, and in consequence were too small to provide much shade.

On this day of arrival, however, everything aglow in the suave light of afternoon, Napoleon, quickened by the crisp impressions, the sense of regeneration of spirit that arrival in a new place bestows, was in a mood to be pleased. "The Admiral was eager to show him everything down to the smallest details: he had . . . directed everything himself, certain work had even been done by his own hands. The Emperor found it all very satisfactory: the Admiral showed how delighted he was at this." As soon as Cockburn had gone, Napoleon, who had not had a bath since he left la Malmaison, instantly made off to his *baaignoire*, telling Las Cases at the same time to come in for a talk, and ended by telling him to have a bath himself the next day. Las Cases out of "profound respect" demurred.

"*Mon cher*," protested Napoleon, "in prison we must learn to help each other. After all I can't make use of this contraption all day long, and a bath will do you as much good as it does me."

Las Cases and his son had rooms in Longwood itself; so had Comte and Comtesse de Montholon and their son. Young Baron Gourgaud and O'Meara, Napoleon's doctor — that, to posterity, most useful informer of the daily doings at this Tuileries-in-little — were temporarily lodged in a tent; and Comte Bertrand, Napoleon's Grand Marshal, with his wife and three children, was in a small house at Hutt's Gate, about a mile from Longwood. In addition to his suite Napoleon had brought twelve servants with him, of whom his first valet was Marchand, son to the King of Rome's Nanny Marchand.

At Longwood, as at The Briars, the sinister figure of Time

dogged Napoleon's steps. He worked with Las Cases and his son at his memoirs, or walked about the grounds. Horses and carriages meanwhile had been ordered for him from the Cape. After dinner he would play *reversi*, a game he had been fond of in his young days. "This recollection pleased him", writes Las Cases; "he thought he would be able to amuse himself with it for a long time; he was soon undeceived." If it was not *reversi*, then it might be chess or the billiard table: the billiard table but not always billiards, as what chiefly amused Napoleon was to collect all the balls, and then, with his hand, hurl them one after another into the pockets, or, if he did play billiards, he would rush through the game, always going round the table at a run. But one of his favourite ways of getting through the evening was to read aloud from Racine, Molière, or Voltaire; and after dinner he would, says Las Cases, ask them "if this evening we should go and hear comedy, opera, or tragedy". Napoleon read with enthusiasm, commenting with great verve as he went; but there were moments when those who listened felt they had had enough. In fact Madame de Montholon, who appears to have preferred dancing to the classics, would often during these readings drift into unconsciousness, only to be recalled to actuality by the sharp cry, "Madame Montholon, you are asleep!" She and Madame Bertrand, when they first came to the island, had gone to several balls given by Cockburn, but Napoleon was so annoyed at this fraternizing with the English that he sharply reprimanded Madame Bertrand, requesting her not to treat Longwood as if it were an inn.

There is no doubt that everything was done, compatible with preventing Napoleon's escape, to mitigate his sense of being a prisoner. Glimpses of the red coats of the soldiers of the 53rd Regiment posted on the hills around Longwood could not be helped, but the original order that an English officer should always accompany him on his rides was withdrawn, as Napoleon said that unless it was he would not so much as mount his horse. But the fact that at night sentries were placed at his door and windows was furiously resented: so, too, was his not being allowed "free communication with the inhabitants". Actually the arrangement of the posting of the sentries sounds, in the circumstances,

perfectly reasonable. According to O'Meara, "a subaltern's guard was posted at the entrance of Longwood, about six hundred paces from the house, and a cordon of sentinels and pickets were placed round the limits. At nine o'clock the sentinels were drawn in and stationed in communication with each other. . . . After nine Napoleon was not at liberty to leave the house unless in company with a field officer ; and no person whatever was allowed to pass without the counter-sign."

Was all this precaution necessary ? There is no doubt that during his first few years at St. Helena Napoleon was considering escape. When he was first taken there, there was a great movement of enthusiasm for him in the United States, and quixotic Americans were agog with schemes and money to effect a rescue. Even when Napoleon was at Plymouth a letter had been sent by one of his Italian subjects, ostensibly addressed to Madame Bertrand, but in reality for the Emperor, saying that £16,000 was at his disposal to aid escape, one-fourth of which would be placed with firms in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Charlestown. This letter missed Madame Bertrand at Plymouth, followed her to St. Helena, fell into Cockburn's hands, and was forwarded by him to the English Government. In our St. Helena records are reports of further schemes. News came on two occasions of ships that had set sail from America to rescue the Atlantic prisoner, and information was received about large sums of money that were going to be placed at Napoleon's disposal to be used for bribes. Other warnings came from time to time of people in the island to whom Napoleon was already giving money : Gourgaud himself mentions gold being given by the Emperor to the St. Helena slaves. There is no doubt that Napoleon's anger at the surveillance imposed on him came from the knowledge of its preventing any possibility of escape. From the same cause, too, arose his original hatred of Lowe.

There is an illuminating incident related by Las Cases that took place the day of Napoleon's arrival at Longwood. "After his bath the Emperor, not wanting to dress again, dined in his room, and kept me with him : we were alone : conversation led to a very particular circumstance of which the result might be of *great importance*. He asked my advice." He also told Las Cases to go

further into the matter and report to him next day. All this has strongly the air of being a project for escape that Napoleon had formed directly he saw all the arrangements at Longwood. Two days later Las Cases writes : " I gave the Emperor my report on the special subject. . . . He decided to do nothing, believing it altogether useless . . . furthermore the upshot has proved that he judged right. It would have been perfectly useless, it could not have led to any result."

The precautions at Longwood to prevent Napoleon from escaping exasperated him from the first moment he became aware of them, and within a few weeks of his arrival he was making Montholon write his grievances to Cockburn, the letter ending : " Do not let the Admiral expect that I shall negotiate about any of these subjects with him. If he came tomorrow, in spite of my just resentment, he would find me with my face as smiling and my conversation as indifferent as usual . . . the Emperor has governed too long not to know that he ought never to commit himself to the discretion of anyone who would have the power of falsely saying, *The Emperor told me that*, for the Emperor would not even have the resource of affirmation or otherwise . . . it is therefore a necessity to employ someone who can tell the narrator that he lies in what he declares to have been said . . . which the Emperor would not be able to do."

In Sir George Cockburn's portrait a certain general bluntness of face is redeemed by the thoughtful expression of the eyes, the fine cutting of the slender nose and self-controlled lips. Here is a man who would be temperate and generous in his treatment of anyone in his power, but who at the same time would demand adherence to certain principles to which he himself conformed. Napoleon in his letter had rough-riden over these principles, had injured the Admiral's susceptibilities both as man and as British sailor. Cockburn had, as we have seen, been extremely long-suffering with his prisoner, but now, the ill-bred tone of this letter, the insulting implications, the insolence as coming from prisoner to gaoler . . . it was too much. The Admiral's reply, says Las Cases, was " injurious and brutal ". Las Cases only gives us a few words of this reply, and in paraphrase merely, quoting Cockburn as saying, " Such a thing as an Emperor is not known

in St. Helena ” ; ¹ and that “ the justice and moderation of the English Government in respect of us would be the admiration of future ages, etc. etc.”

O'Meara had apparently acted Mercury in this exchange of hostility, as Las Cases says that the doctor “ was charged to accompany this written response with the most revolting verbal additions ”. The only one of these verbal additions we know of was the question whether Napoleon would wish to have sent on to him “ the atrocious libels and anonymous letters ” about himself that Cockburn intercepted.

A day or so after Napoleon had despatched his letter, a message was brought him from Cockburn saying that some ladies who had arrived in the island “ solicited the favour of being presented ” to him by the Admiral.

“ The Emperor,” says Las Cases, “ replied sharply that he would see no one, that he wished to be left in peace.”

“ At the point we had reached,” continues Las Cases, “ this personal politeness of the Admiral's was one more insult.”

Napoleon had begun on the voyage to St. Helena to learn English from Las Cases, and at Longwood he continued his efforts. Either Las Cases was not a very competent teacher, or Napoleon was not a quick learner (actually he had never even learnt to write French correctly), or perhaps the system pursued was not fortunate : whichever of them was at fault, Napoleon's progress was remarkably slow. One day from within the bath-room at Longwood there issued the most peculiar sounds, cries shrill and strange, words that bore a certain resemblance to, and yet were not, “ Chairs to mend ”, “ Sweet Lavender . . . who'll buy my lavender ? ” These hybrid accents came from Napoleon, who, seated in his bath, was energetically trying to imitate the cries of London.

¹ Las Cases appears to be in error in giving this phrase of Sir George Cockburn as in answer to this particular letter. It appears in a letter of the Admiral of 6th November in reply to one of Bertrand's, and the actual wording was : “ You oblige me officially to explain to you that I have no cognizance of any Emperor being actually upon this island.”

Sir George Cockburn and Sir Hudson Lowe were forbidden by the English Government to admit of Napoleon being styled Emperor.

5

On April the 14th 1816 there arrived at Jamestown the man who was to go down in history as the great St. Helena opponent of Napoleon, Sir Hudson Lowe. As Governor of the island he was to take over the responsibilities of both Cockburn and the retiring Governor, Colonel Wilks.

Lowe was now a man of about forty-seven, tall and slight, his fair hair turning grey. That firmness and perspicacity which had been the basis of his twenty-eight years' success as a soldier showed in the intent gaze that came from beneath his jutting brows; and he had acquired the abruptness of movement and manner of a soldier to whom his profession is paramount. Behind him stretched a military record which, if not spectacular, was highly creditable. He had in his early days served in Corsica and Elba, finally commanding a corps of Corsican exiles who enlisted for service under the English. With these Corsican Rangers Lowe campaigned in Egypt, and in 1810 captured the isle of Santa Maura; of which he then became Governor, much to the appreciation of the inhabitants. In 1813 he was sent to Russia, and acted as attaché on Blücher's staff. It was Lowe who brought to England the news of Napoleon's abdication; he was knighted by the Prince Regent, and received Russian and Prussian Orders for his services. At the end of 1814 he was made Quartermaster-General of the English troops in the Netherlands. In his course through life he had been accustomed to both winning and keeping popularity and friends, but, on this April day, as his ship slowly drew into the harbour of Jamestown, he little realized that he was about to take up a post in which all his fine qualities would be powerless against what Sir George Bingham described as "the dirty little intrigues of himself [Napoleon] and his set"; a post where his character was to be so falsified and maligned that it would remain smirched for generations.

The day after Lowe's arrival he was installed as Governor. He then sent a message to Napoleon to say that he would call on him at nine o'clock the following morning. Napoleon made no demur at the time, but when, at that certainly bald hour for an interview, Lowe and Cockburn arrived with a numerous staff "in

the midst of a pelting storm of rain and wind ", Napoleon, merely because it was not his custom to receive anyone so early, sent a message to say he was indisposed and could not see them. He did, however, say he would be visible next day at two o'clock.

This morning energy on the part of Lowe and Cockburn was at once added to Napoleon's collection of British insults. Cockburn, so Napoleon told O'Meara, " wished to embroil me with the new Governor, and for that purpose persuaded him to come up here at nine o'clock in the morning, though he well knew that I never had received any persons, nor ever would, at that hour. . . . It shows the greatest want of generosity to insult the unfortunate."

O'Meara says he assured him " that I was perfectly convinced the whole was a mistake, that the Admiral never had the smallest intention of insulting or embroiling him with the Governor."

But Napoleon merely flung out, " I, in my misfortunes, sought an asylum, and instead of that I have found contempt, ill-treatment, and insult."

The interview next day between Napoleon and Lowe was short but not inharmonious. Napoleon spent the time chiefly in discussing his Egyptian campaign from the English point of view, and then put Lowe through a short personal catechism — was he married? had his marriage not taken place shortly before leaving England? how did he like St. Helena? On his side Lowe, by his final remark, showed both his tact and his agreeable attitude to his prisoner. Napoleon had asked him how many years he had been in the service.

" Twenty-eight," replied Lowe.

" I am, therefore," remarked Napoleon, " an older soldier than you."

" Of which," countered Lowe, " history will make mention in a very different manner."

Napoleon smiled but said nothing.

The fact of Napoleon having refused to see Lowe the first time he called, and their conversation when they did meet, provided endless talk for the exiles both " in the garden and driving in the calash ". The talk went on again after dinner : " someone ", says Las Cases, " remarked . . . that the Governor's two first days



SIR HUDSON LOWE
From a drawing by Wyvill



had been days of battle, and must make him think that we were intractable, when we are really so gentle and so patient. . . .” At this “the Emperor could not refrain from smiling, and from pinching the speaker’s ear”. Later, Napoleon referred to himself with satisfaction as “a regular porcupine on which he [Lowe] does not know where to put his hand”.

Sir Hudson Lowe was placed in the invidious position of taking over the surveillance of Napoleon from Cockburn, and carrying on Cockburn’s arrangements, while at the same time finding that a certain laxness had already crept in. For instance, there was the case of Captain Poppleton and his duties. Captain Poppleton was the English orderly officer who lived at Longwood, and whose duty it was to see Napoleon twice a day or, at least, to ascertain through a witness that he was actually somewhere in the house or grounds of Longwood. But this ascertaining of the Emperor’s presence without seeing him in person was a precarious business. For example, a report sent by Poppleton to Lowe at the end of April 1816 runs : “I did not see General Bonaparte the whole of yesterday ; he did not quit his apartment even to dinner. I ascertained his being there in the morning by the usual ringing of his bell.” But was the fact that Napoleon’s bell had been rung evidence that it was he who had rung it ? Then that same evening Madame de Montholon told Poppleton that “General Bonaparte as well as herself had been extremely ill the whole of the previous night in consequence of eating some fish”, but, later, Poppleton discovered through Napoleon’s valet that far from being ill from the fish Napoleon had been up all night writing. Only a few days before this, when Lowe had asked for an interview with Napoleon, he had been told he was ill and in bed. Hardly had Lowe gone when Napoleon’s carriage came round and he went for a drive. Minute incidents ; but, the situation being what it was, the minutest incident might have serious implications and lead finally to a loophole through which Napoleon might effect an escape. Evasiveness over allowing himself to be seen twice a day had, since Lowe’s arrival, become one of Napoleon’s cherished provocations. His stock excuse was that he was “confined by indisposition”, but at the same time he would refuse admittance to

his doctor, O'Meara, who could have acted as witness to vouch for his presence.

The more one studies the Hudson Lowe papers and the memoirs of Las Cases, Montholon, Gourgaud, and O'Meara, the more one considers the conversations between Napoleon and these men, the more evident it appears that, concurrently with his policy of throwing odium on the English Government and Lowe for their treatment of him, he was, during his early days at St. Helena, always weighing his chances of escape, and that with a man less astute and firm than Lowe he would probably have accomplished it. And, conversely, his growing insolence to, and hatred of, the Governor undoubtedly arose from the fact that he was the man who circumvented this intention. In countering his prisoner's policy of not allowing himself to be seen, Lowe endeavoured with the most tactful consideration to avoid irritating his sensibilities. "Having received an intimation from Captain Poppleton . . ." writes Lowe, "that General Bonaparte had not been visible the day before, but that either he or Dr. O'Meara would certainly endeavour to see him in the course of that evening . . . I immediately repaired to Longwood, in order to prevent any unpleasant intrusion on him. . . . I met General Montholon at the door of the house, asked how General Bonaparte was, and, on being told he was indisposed and suffering, said I wished to offer him the assistance of a medical officer, but begged him to wait on General Bonaparte and acquaint him I was there. . . . I passed through his dining-room, drawing-room, another room in which were displayed a great number of maps and plans laid out on a table, and several loose quires of writing . . . and was then introduced into an inner apartment, with a small bed in it and a couch, on which latter Bonaparte was reclining, having only his dressing-gown on, and without his shoes. He raised himself up a little as I entered the room and, pointing out a chair to me close to the couch, desired I would sit down. I seated myself, and commenced the conversation by saying I was sorry to hear he was suffering from indisposition, and had come to offer him the assistance of a medical officer of respectability [Dr. Baxter]. . . ."

"I want no doctors," retorted Napoleon.

He made some contemptuous observations on the English Admiralty not providing every ship above 200 tons with a chronometer, "a miserable piece of economy". After this and a few other insignificant remarks, "a short interval of silence ensued. He lay reclined on his couch, his eyes cast down, apparently suffering a good deal from an oppression in his breathing . . . and his countenance unusually sallow." There was some talk about Beauchamp's *Campaign of 1814*, which Napoleon had been reading, and which was now lying flung on the floor, according to his usual habit when he had finished with a book. After this, "he sat reflecting a few moments without any observation". Then he gave vent to — "The Allies have made a convention declaring me their prisoner : what do they mean ? . . . I gave myself up to England, and to no other Power. . . . I misunderstood the character of the English people. I should have surrendered myself to the Emperor of Russia who was my friend, or to the Emperor of Austria who was my relation. There is courage in putting a man to death [was d'Enghien in his mind ?], but it is an act of cowardice to let him languish, and to poison him, in so horrid an island and in so detestable a climate."

Lowe replied that "the island of St. Helena had never been regarded in that light ; that, except so far as related to the precautions necessary for his personal security, it had been the desire of the British Government to render his situation as comfortable as possible ; that the house, furniture, and effects of every kind coming out for his use, certainly indicated as much regard as it was possible to show him consistent with the main object for which this place of residence had been selected."

All this was so unanswerable that Napoleon took refuge in the sensational, "Let them send me a coffin ; a couple of balls in the head is all that is necessary. What does it signify to me whether I lie on a velvet couch or on fustian ? I am a soldier, and accustomed to everything."

"He then", says Lowe, "gave a list of his grievances : the locality of Longwood ; the lack of trees ; his exclusion from free conversation with the islanders ; that he could not ride to any extent."

Actually, he could ride anywhere within nearly a twelve-mile

radius unaccompanied, and on any part of the island he chose if an English officer rode with him. His fixed intention was in some way or other to get permission to ride wherever he wished without being accompanied. Of this Lowe was perfectly aware, and perfectly aware too of why he wished it, and he must have smiled inwardly when Napoleon suddenly exclaimed, "If you cannot extend my limits you can do nothing for me."

Here, in this demand for a wider range, was the crux of the whole matter. Across a little table placed between them on which stood a cup of coffee, the two pairs of male eyes fenced with each other; Napoleon now trying with a pathetic note to work on the sensibilities of the Englishman. "He did not want to see the camp always; he could not ride where that was. He wished the people of the island might be allowed to come and see him."

"His addresses to me on this point", continues Lowe, "were humble and artful; they obtained no assent from me." Napoleon realized it only too well: and in the knowledge his feelings for his antagonist, up till now temperate and appreciative, turned to loathing.

When Lowe, on taking his leave, again offered Napoleon his own doctor, he merely shot out, "I want no doctors."

"I have", Napoleon later exploded to O'Meara, "seen Russian Tartars, Cossacks, Calmucks . . . but never before in my life have I beheld so ill-favoured and so forbidding a countenance." And again, the next day, "I never saw such a horrid countenance. He sat on a chair opposite to my sofa, and on the little table between us there was a cup of coffee. His physiognomy made such an unfavourable impression upon me, that I thought his looks had poisoned it, and I ordered Marchand to throw it out of the window; I could not have swallowed it for the world."

6

O'Meara, sent for by Napoleon a few days after this interview, gives us an exact picture of the room as Lowe must have seen it as he sat talking to his peevish charge.

"Napoleon", writes O'Meara, "sent Marchand for me at

about nine o'clock. Was introduced by the back-door into his bedroom. . . . It was about fourteen feet by twelve, and ten or eleven feet in height. The walls were lined with brown nankeen [this was fluted] bordered and edged with common green bordering paper. . . . Two small windows, without pullies, looking towards the camp of the 53rd Regiment, one of which was thrown up and fastened by a piece of notched wood. Window curtains of white long-cloth, a small fireplace, a shabby grate, and fire-irons to match, with a paltry mantelpiece of wood, painted white, upon which stood a small marble bust of his son. Above the mantelpiece hung the portrait of Marie Louise, and four or five of young Napoleon, one of which was embroidered by the hands of his mother. A little more to the right hung also a miniature picture of the Empress Josephine, and to the left was suspended the alarm chamber-watch of Frederick the Great, obtained by Napoleon at Potsdam, while on the right, the consular watch, engraved with the cypher B, hung by a chain of the plaited hair of Marie Louise, from a pin stuck in the nankeen lining." On the mantelpiece there also stood "a very small glass, and, flanking it, two candles, two bottles, two cups of silver-gilt taken from Napoleon's dressing-case". By a sofa, on which he lay most of the day with piles of books tumbling all round him, stood a little table on which, when light was needed, would be placed a three-branched candlestick. "The floor was covered with a second-hand carpet, which had once decorated the dining-room of a lieutenant of the St. Helena artillery. In the right-hand corner was placed the little plain iron camp-bedstead, with green silk curtains, upon which its master had reposed on the fields of Marengo and Austerlitz. Between the windows there was a paltry second-hand chest of drawers, and an old bookcase with green blinds stood on the left of the door leading to the next apartment. Four or five cane-bottomed chairs, painted green, were standing here and there about the room. Before the back-door there was a screen covered with nankeen, and between that and the fireplace, an old-fashioned sofa covered with white long-cloth, upon which reclined Napoleon, clothed in his white morning gown, white loose trousers and stockings all in one. A chequered piece of red Madras muslin upon his head, and his

shirt collar open without a cravat. His air was melancholy and troubled. Before him stood a little round table, with some books, at the foot of which lay, in confusion upon the carpet, a heap of those which he had already perused, and at the foot of the sofa, facing him, was suspended a portrait of the Empress Marie Louise, with her son in her arms. In front of the fireplace stood Las Cases with his arms folded over his breast, and some papers in one of his hands. Of all the former magnificence of the once mighty Emperor of France nothing was present except for a superb wash-hand-stand containing a silver basin, and water-jug of the same metal, in the left-hand corner." The general effect of the room could not have been improved by Napoleon's habit of indiscriminate spitting — carpet or bed-curtains, it was all one to him.

This small room and modest furnishing was only intended to be temporary. A new and most comfortable house with large rooms was to be built where Napoleon chose, and materials and furniture had either already arrived or were on their way. ("That palace which they say they have sent out for me. . . .") The reason this projected house was not built for several years will shortly appear.

In Napoleon's bedroom at Longwood the high proportion of portraits of hisson compared with those of Marie Louise gives a fair indication of the comparative place those two held in his affections. The pictures of Marie Louise were proof of the highest point he had touched socially, emphasizing to the world that the Emperor of Austria was "my relation". Actually, as the humid tropical days succeeded each other, Josephine, the woman whose genius of personality so perfectly correlated with his own genius of mind, was more than ever regaining the place she had once held in his heart. But Josephine was no longer in this world; and the being he at present ached for was his son. While he had been at Elba all hope of seeing him again was not entirely dead. When there he constantly used a snuff-box on which was a portrait of the child. This he one day dropped, and was in the greatest concern for fear he had injured it, and, finding he had not, he kept referring to the incident during the day, saying how distressed he would have been "if the features of his *pauvre petit chou* had been injured by his clumsiness". But now at St. Helena the

knowledge that only by the slenderest chance would he ever so much as see the child again was within him like a wound, and probably that special snuff-box portrait had become too poignant ; for, shortly after his arrival at Longwood, Las Cases tells us that one day when he was in Napoleon's room while he was dressing, the Emperor, " finishing his toilet, and choosing among two or three snuff-boxes that he had at hand, gave one, brusquely enough, to his chamber-valet [Marchand]. 'Put that away,' he said, 'I'm always seeing it ; it upsets me.' "

" I cannot say what it was," continues Las Cases. " I imagine, however, that it was a portrait of the King of Rome."

The exceptional enchantment of the child re-echoed even in Napoleon's Atlantic island ; for we find Lowe writing of the Austrian Commissioner at St. Helena that he " may be retained here *in petto* until it may be determined what shall be the fate and fortunes of the King of Rome, of whose beauty, intelligence, and the dignity of whose infantine manner, the Baroness, his wife, seems quite full ".

For in June three Commissioners, from Russia, Austria, and France respectively, had arrived at St. Helena. They had no responsibility for the security of Napoleon, but the representatives of Austria and France had to send a report every month to their Governments " stating Bonaparte to be in existence and his personal security provided for ". (" What folly it is ", exclaimed Napoleon, " to send those Commissioners out here ! without charge or responsibility ; they will have nothing to do but walk about the streets and creep up the rocks.")

The Governor-General of India at that time was the Earl of Loudon and Moira, and in May his wife, on her way to join him, arrived at St. Helena. Lowe sent a polite note through Bertrand asking Napoleon to come to dinner at Plantation House to meet her. As this would have necessitated an English officer accompanying him, Napoleon did not condescend to answer Lowe but merely sent a verbal message to Lady Moira saying he would have been charmed to meet her " if she had been within his limits " : in this manner striking, as he had of course intended, a plaintive-prisoner note. A few days later Lowe discussed the incident with Bertrand, Lowe telling him he " had not known of the difficulty

which prevented General Bonaparte from seeing the Countess of Loudon, as it could have been so easily removed ; that, if he had any objection to being accompanied by the orderly officer resident at Longwood House, I would myself, with pleasure, have accompanied him, or sent any officer of my personal staff, or . . . any other officer of his own particular desire on the island ”.

Bertrand replied that “ ‘ the Emperor ’ was resolved never to go beyond his limits, if accompanied by any British officer whatever ”. Bertrand then began on the old story of how unnecessary these restrictions were, and ended by saying, “ He will never go beyond the limits assigned to him if he is to be accompanied by an English officer ; if they wish to kill him here, they can do so ”.

“ If General Bonaparte wishes to kill himself it is not our fault,” retorted Lowe, “ being at all times free to go out, it is his own affair if he does not profit by it. The reproach addressed to us is unjust.” He added that he “ was really sorry to observe he had made such a strange law to himself ”, and pointed out “ that he had an extent of nearly twelve miles on the most level and practicable part of the island for his habitual exercise without being accompanied by anyone ”. He added “ that there were several officers in the island whom I was well assured the Prince Regent of England would not feel it a humiliation to be attended by ”. Bertrand, continues Lowe, “ appeared struck with my last observation, but made no reply ”. Finally, “ I mentioned ”, says Lowe, “ that it was not an encouragement to grant a further extension to his limits and that of the officers with him, when I found that hardly a stranger or any other person left the island, who had an opportunity of communication with him, that was not solicited to be the bearer of letters or messages, under pretence of conveying information to their friends or relations ; at the same time that they all knew I was always ready myself to transmit any letters or communication they might have to send on such subjects. General Bertrand ”, concludes Lowe, “ attempted to justify himself from this observation, but did it very imperfectly.”

After this conversation with Bertrand, Lowe went on to Longwood House to see Napoleon “ about the house and furniture which had been sent from England ”. Passing through the outer dining-room, he reached the drawing-room, where he found

Napoleon, a solitary figure, standing up ready posed to receive him. "He was alone, standing with his hat under his arm in the manner he usually presents himself when he assumes his imperial dignity. He remained silent, expecting I would address him."

Lowe in his turn expected Napoleon to start the conversation, and for a few moments the two men stood silently facing each other. Nothing happened. . . . Then Lowe began to explain that as the materials for the construction of a new house, and the necessary furniture, had now for the most part arrived, he wished to know whether Napoleon would prefer an entirely new house or would rather have his present one made more comfortable. "Before making any disposition on the subject, I wished to know", concluded Lowe, "whether you had any desires to communicate to me regarding it."

The imperial figure stood immovable and speechless.

"Observing his silence continue," goes on Lowe, "I again commenced by saying — 'I have conceived, Sir, that possibly the addition of two or three *salons* to your present house, with other improvements to it, might add to your convenience in less time than by constructing a new building.'"

Then suddenly a regular torrent burst from Napoleon, "with such rapidity," explains Lowe, "such intemperance, and so much warmth, that it is difficult to repeat every word he used. Without apparently having lent an ear to what I had said, he began, 'I cannot understand the conduct of your Government towards me. Do they want to kill me? Are you come here to be my executioner — my gaoler? Posterity will judge of the way in which I have been treated, the sufferings I experience will recoil upon your nation. No, Sir, I will never allow anyone to enter the interior of my house, to penetrate into my bedchamber, as you have ordered to be done. When I heard of your arrival in this island, I thought that, as an officer of the army, I should find you possessed of politer manners than the Admiral, who, as a naval officer, might have had a rougher bearing. . . . But how do you treat me? It is an insult to invite me to dinner, and to call me General Bonaparte. I am the Emperor Napoleon. Are you come here to be my executioner, my gaoler?' Whilst speaking in this manner, his right arm moved backwards and forwards, his

person stood fixed, his eyes and countenance exhibiting everything which could be supposed in a person who meant to intimidate or to irritate.

"I suffered him to proceed . . . until he was nearly out of breath, when, on his stopping, I said, 'Sir, I have not come here to be insulted but to treat of an affair which concerns you more than it does me. If you are not disposed to speak about it, I will retire.'

"'I had no intention to insult you, Sir, but how have you treated me? Has it been in a way becoming a soldier?'

"'Sir, I am a soldier to perform the duties I owe to my country in conformity with its customs, and not according to the mode of other countries. Besides, if you think you have any cause to complain, you have only to write, and I will transmit your representation to England by the first opportunity.'

"'What will be the use of sending it to your Government? It will not be attended to there any more than here.'

"'I will have it published in all the papers of the Continent, if you wish it. I am performing my duty, and am indifferent to anything besides.'"

Ignoring this suggestion, Napoleon went on, "Your Government has made me no official communication of the arrival of this house. Is it to be constructed where I please, or where you may fix it to be?"

"I am now come, Sir, for the express purpose of announcing it to you. . . . If there is any particular spot which you might have thought of to erect it upon, I will examine it, and have it erected there if I see no objection to it. . . ."

"Then you had better speak to the *Grand Maréchal* [Bertrand] about it . . . and settle it with him."

"I prefer, Sir, addressing you upon it. I find so many *mésintelligences* happen when I adopt the medium of other persons. . . ."

Napoleon, says Lowe, "made no particular reply to this, walked about for a moment, and then, working himself up apparently to say something which he thought would appal me with extraordinary surprise or dread, he said, 'Shall I tell you the truth, Sir? Yes, Sir, shall I tell you the truth? I believe that you

have received orders to kill me — yes, to kill me. Yes, Sir, you have received orders to do everything, everything.' He then looked at me as if expecting a reply.

"My answer was, 'You remarked, Sir, at the last interview I had with you, that you had misunderstood the character of the English people, and you now equally misunderstand that of the English soldier.' Our conversation here terminated. He stood a little while, and, as neither of us had anything more to say, we mutually separated."

Before going, however, Lowe said, "Monsieur," and on Napoleon turning his head towards him, he went on, "there is at present an officer of my staff with me whom I am desirous . . . of presenting to you. . . ."

"I cannot receive him at present ; when one is insulted, one is not in a humour to see anyone."

Lowe bowed and left the room.

This quiet retirement on the Governor's part annoyed Napoleon. "I should have liked," he told Las Cases afterwards, "for his sake, to have seen him evince a little anger, or pull the door violently after him when he went away. This would at least have shown that there was some spring and elasticity about him, but I found nothing of the kind." "*I behaved very ill to him, no doubt . . .*" he also remarked, "but I was out of humour, and could not help it."

7

Dr. O'Meara's position at St. Helena, medical adviser to Napoleon, and yet in English pay — one foot in Longwood and one in Plantation House (the Governor's official house) — gave him great scope, as he could represent any member of either in a risible aspect without a twinge of conscience. However, in spite of his protestation, "my honour, the protection of which has ever been the sentiment nearest my heart", there are incidents in his life which call for a definition of his sense of honour. But if, finally, he treacherously maligned Lowe, we do owe him a debt in that, "Placed by peculiar circumstances, arising from my profession, near the person of the most extraordinary man perhaps of any age, in the most critical juncture of his life", he

developed into one of the many valuable recorders who during the course of Napoleon's life never failed to snatch up his remarks, gestures, and conversations. However, says O'Meara, "Before . . . I had been long scorched upon the rock of St. Helena, I was taught to appreciate the embarrassments of my situation".

But, actually, he appears to have been more amused than embarrassed. Beneath the official atmosphere of Longwood and Plantation House there fizzed the inevitable jokes, sniggers, and giggles, and in all this Barry O'Meara was to the fore. His various letters from the island were not only informative but jocular. His chief weapon was obscenity; his salacious remarks on Madame de Montholon's condition — he at the time attending her for her coming confinement — being so pungent that Professor Forsyth, in editing the Hudson Lowe Papers, shuddered, and had recourse to asterisks. If it was not Madame de Montholon herself, then it was her domestic interior that provided matter for O'Meara's facetiousness. Most dreary facetiousness, so it appears to us now, but in his day it was applauded. Some of his letters were shown to, and much appreciated by, the Prince Regent. For O'Meara did not write for private perusal only; he was a confidential informant of the doings at Longwood to the English Government, and his letters were circulated among the Cabinet. Meanwhile, Napoleon considered him a safe depositary for his confidences: and Lowe considered him a safe depositary for his.

8

In April Napoleon had a conversation with Colonel (afterwards Sir Henry) Keating that gives a strangely illuminating *aperçu* of his principles of government. This particular conversation has passed through several hands, but Professor Forsyth, who records it, was assured by Sir Henry Keating's son that the substance of it was correct, as his father had often repeated it to him.¹

Napoleon, after telling Colonel Keating that it was "im-

¹ On Colonel Keating's arrival in England he repeated this conversation to the Prince Regent, who passed it on to Louis Philippe, then in this country. Louis Philippe entered it in his journal, under "Twickenham".

possible that the Bourbons could retain power in France, and that recourse must be had to himself or his son ", went on, " All the monarchs of Europe are fools with their legitimacy. . . . I must speak to your Prince Regent. He has sense and spirit, and would understand what I have to say to him. Europe and especially France are too enlightened to be caught by the stupid nonsense which the old monarchs and their courts talk about legitimacy, divine right, the throne, and the altar. The less they wish to grant liberty to their subjects the more they must speak to them about it. I do not wish it any more than they, you may be sure. I know well that nowadays it requires a rod of iron to rule men, but *it must be gilded*, and we must make them believe when we strike them that they direct the blow themselves. It is necessary one should always talk of liberty, equality, justice, and disinterestedness, and never grant any liberty whatever. No change of system is required but only a change of language, and, provided we talk to the people of liberty and equality, I answer for it that they may be easily oppressed and made to pay down to their last farthing, without being tempted to rise in insurrection or feeling really any discontent."

The world has seen with what success Hitler and Mussolini acted on this principle.

Napoleon, having refused to enter into any discussion with Lowe on the subject of another house being built for him, or, alternatively, improvements being made at Longwood, sent a letter to the Governor in July, which he had dictated to Montholon, grumbling over the fact that he had not been given Plantation House for himself, saying vaguely, " if you have instructions to build " it ought to be where there were trees and water ; and, finally, demanding some repairs to be done at Longwood. Lowe replied that everything necessary should be done, and that he would himself attend to the matter.

The expense of keeping Napoleon and his servants, his dependants, and his dependants' servants, in all a collection of fifty-five people, had begun to exercise the mind of the English Government. They decided that the amount to be expended annually ought not to exceed £8000, and that any further expenses must

come from Napoleon's own funds. Napoleon said " he would rather bear the whole expense himself than be indebted to Government for a part . . . provided he was allowed to draw from his own resources through the medium of sealed letters ". These sealed letters would, of course, have entirely invalidated the rule that all letters which Napoleon either sent or received had to be censored by the Governor. Annoyance at this prohibition was, in company with all his other grievances, circulating in Napoleon's mind when on the 17th of July Lowe arrived at Longwood to superintend the repairs Napoleon had asked for. This necessitated what was intended on Lowe's part to be a reasonable discussion with Napoleon, but, as usual, the interview proved to be merely a succession of collisions between irascibility on one side and self-control on the other.

Lowe opened the conversation by asking if there was anything particular Napoleon wished to say about the alterations, but he, ignoring this completely, started his usual complaints about St. Helena and the restrictions he had to submit to ; dug up his old grievance of Sir George Cockburn having brought Lowe to Longwood for the first time at nine o'clock in the morning ; and then reverted to a letter Lowe had written to Bertrand in reply to a particularly insulting one from the Grand Marshal himself. " He ought to have cut your throat . . ." exclaimed Napoleon, adding, " but I did not advise him to do so, you understand." He continued scraping up grievances, at one moment telling Lowe, " You are a Lieutenant-General, and should not perform your duty like a sentinel," and at another exclaiming, " Ah ! if, while you load me with chains, your forms are civil, your language may well be so too." Then he again began girding against the restrictions, saying it was all but impossible he could escape.

" I made no reply," writes Lowe, " but took the first opportunity to renew the subject of the repairs at Longwood."

Ignoring this completely, Napoleon observed that it would take six years to build him a new house, but that in two years' time there would be a change in the Ministry in England or in the Government in France " and I shall no longer be here ", and then in the same breath he condemned the position of Longwood, the sun, and the wind : finally bursting out with " it was impossible

Government could know the disagreeableness of his situation in every respect ; that they could not approve my mode of treating him ; that my letters must represent matters differently, etc. etc."

"I said I could do nothing more than represent to Government everything he said . . . that I only begged him to be assured I did not wish to aggravate what was unpleasant in his situation, and should be always happy to show attention to every request he made which was not incompatible with the main object of the duty I was charged with.

"He bowed to me, and I retired."

It is to Lowe's credit that he never winced from putting down, in his official reports to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Bathurst, Napoleon's complaints against his own behaviour. In transmitting the despatch from which these excerpts are taken Lowe spoke of "the expediency of constructing a new house should he [Napoleon] require it, in a part of the island more agreeable to him. The spot which unites the most advantages is a place called Rosemary Hall. It lies about a mile from Plantation House, in one of the most beautiful and cultivated parts of the island."

But if both in his conversations with Napoleon and in his reports of these conversations Lowe held himself in with admirable self-control, the invidious position that Napoleon's intransigent attitude placed him in rasped his nerves, and there were obviously times when he scarcely knew what line to take with his prisoner, for, as he told O'Meara, "one must either be a blind admirer of his frailties or a yielding instrument to work with, a mere slave in thought to him. Otherwise he who has business which opposes his views must make up his mind to every species of obloquy."

The Irish doctor, peering out of one of the Longwood windows, or strolling round the corner of the house, would notice with malicious amusement little physical indications of the exasperated state to which Napoleon's behaviour was reducing the Governor, and there is a touch of a Gillray cartoon in the pictures O'Meara gives of Napoleon's antagonist when faced with some difficulty — walking about gnawing his nails ; or fussily ordering a certain tree to be cut down in the Longwood garden ; or, when on one occasion he was having a two hours' interview at Long-

wood with Captain Poppleton, frequently coming out of the house, and walking "up and down before the door with one of his arms elevated, and the end of a finger in the angle of his mouth, as was his general custom when in thought".

But if O'Meara was storing up comic aspects of Lowe, which aspects he was to use in disparaging him in later years, at the time he fully realized the injustice of Napoleon's attitude to his gaoler, and was aware how the Emperor and his group were doing all in their power in the way of misrepresentation in the hope, among other things, of getting rid of Lowe. For instance, O'Meara wrote this July to Sir Thomas Reade, "I understand from Madame that they have it in contemplation here to forward a letter of complaint against Sir Hudson to England . . . containing, no doubt, diverse untruths, and praying he may be recalled", and, further on in the same letter, referring to the fact that for the last few days Napoleon had been without champagne, he says, "They are sufficiently malignant to impute all these things to the Governor, instead of setting them down as being owing to the neglect or carelessness of some of Balcombe's people. [Balcombe was purveyor of provisions for Longwood.] Every little circumstance is carried directly to Bonaparte, with every aggravation that malignity and falsehood can suggest to evil-disposed and cankered minds."

Not only were Napoleon's group out to malign Lowe, but ill-feeling and rivalries were beginning to sprout among themselves. In some rearrangements at Longwood, "Great dissensions and civil commotions", writes O'Meara, "between De Las Cases and Gourgaud (the latter backed by Montholon) about the rooms. Both applied to Bonaparte in urgent terms to get them, but Nap. very wisely settled it like Pope Leo by taking them *himself*. Montholon cannot conceal his joy at the failure of De Las Cases."

9

One Sunday morning in the middle of August Napoleon was, as usual, dressing in his room with the assistance of his valets, Marchand, St. Denis, and Novarra. O'Meara had once been present when this was taking place, and tells us how one of the three valets "holds a looking-glass before him, and the other the

necessary implements for shaving, while Marchand is in waiting to hand his clothes, *eau de Cologne*, etc. When he has gone over one side of his face with the razor, he asks St. Denis or Novarra, 'Is it done?', and, after receiving an answer, commences on the other. After he has finished, the glass is held before him to the light, and he examines whether he has removed every portion of his beard. If he perceives or feels that any remains, he sometimes lays hold of one of them by the ear, or gives him a gentle slap on the cheek in a good-humoured manner, crying, 'Ah, *coquin*, why did you tell me it was done?' . . . He then washes with water, in which some *eau de Cologne* has been mingled, a little of which he also sprinkles over his person, very carefully picks and cleans his teeth, frequently has himself rubbed with a flesh-brush [saying to the valet "*Allons, hard, like one does a donkey!*"], changes his linen, and flannel waistcoat, and dresses in white kerseymeré (or brown nankeen) breeches, white waistcoat, silk stockings, shoes and gold buckles, and a green single-breasted coat with white buttons, black stock, with none of the white shirt collar appearing above it, and a three-cornered small cocked hat, with a little tri-coloured cockade. When dressed he always wears the cordon and grand cross of the Legion of Honour. When he has put on his coat, a little *bonbonnière*, his snuff-box, and handkerchief scented with *eau de Cologne* are handed to him by Marchand."

Thus equipped he would leave his room to confront whatever exasperations the day brought forth.

No doubt, on this particular Sunday, he had his breakfast, as he often seems to have had it, in a kind of tent-arbour that had been put up for him in the garden. This sun-sheltered place must have been a fair size, as we read that, when it had to be repaired, the English sailors said they would need about 400 more yards of canvas. The weather this Sunday would have been fine, as some time during the day Napoleon, accompanied by Bertrand, Montholon, Las Cases and his son, went to stroll in the garden. Somewhere too, moving about among the tropical shrubs and the gum-wood trees, O'Meara and Captain Poppleton were to be seen. Suddenly Napoleon caught sight of Lowe arriving with Sir Pulteney Malcolm, the Admiral who had succeeded Cockburn in the command of the naval station at St. Helena. Napoleon at once

hurried away, but on Lowe sending a message asking for an interview he returned to the garden, and he and the two Englishmen, drawing away from the others, began to pace the paths.

O'Meara and Poppleton, at a little distance, watched with interest the three men perambulating together : the short dumpy figure in the buttoned-up coat topped by the little jutting tricorne ; the lean, uniformed figure of Lowe ; and the calm old Admiral. O'Meara from his observation-post particularly noted this calmness, which was in strong contrast to the increasing excitement of Napoleon, who, as he threw out a spate of words, would now stop, now scurry on, agitated and gesticulating. To begin with, ignoring Lowe, the Emperor had addressed himself entirely to the Admiral. Lowe says that he let him run on, but, when there came a moment's silence, he explained to Napoleon that the Grand Marshal had been so insulting to him that "It was obvious after this I could have no further communication with General Bertrand, and I thought it proper to call and acquaint him [Napoleon] with it . . . that I wished in consequence to learn with whom it was his desire I should in future communicate . . . in regard to his affairs".

This was met with such a prolonged silence that Lowe thought no answer was to be vouchsafed him, but all at once, "in a hollow angry tone of voice", still addressing the Admiral, Napoleon gave vent to "General Bertrand is a man who has commanded armies, and he treats him as if he were a corporal ; he is a man well known throughout Europe. . . . He [Lowe] treats us all as if we were deserters from the Royal Corsican or some Italian regiment ; he has insulted Marshal Bertrand, and he deserved what the Marshal said to him."

"I repeated . . ." says Lowe, "that General Bertrand had first insulted me ; that in the conversation which had passed nothing could be more temperate and moderate than my language to him, as could be testified by my military secretary who was present."

But it was of no avail. When angered, justice or injustice was all one to Napoleon ; and he rushed on with his complaints.

"Every kind of despotism and tyranny", put in Lowe, "I hold in abhorrence, and I will repel every accusation against my conduct in this respect as a calumny against him whom it is

impossible to attack with the arms of truth."

This rather involved protest checked Napoleon for a moment. "He stopped a little on my making this observation but soon resumed, addressing himself to the Admiral, and with language more bitter than before, 'There are two kinds of people', he said, 'employed by Governments — those whom they honour, and those whom they dishonour; he is one of the latter; the situation they have given him is that of an executioner.'"

"I perfectly understand", replied Lowe, "this kind of manœuvre — endeavour to brand with infamy, if one cannot attack with other arms. I am perfectly indifferent to all this. I did not seek my present employment, but, it being offered to me, I considered it a sacred duty to accept it."

"Then . . . if the order were given you to assassinate, you would accept it."

"No, Sir."

Napoleon, addressing himself almost entirely to the Admiral, then began to fling one accusation after another at the Governor, saying that Lowe "treated him like a Botany Bay convict", that he did not know how to conduct himself "towards men of honour", that the Governor had rendered his situation forty times worse than it was before his arrival in the island. "You are a Lieutenant-General," Napoleon shot at him, "but you perform your duty as if you were a sentinel; there is no dealing with you; you are a most intractable man. If you are afraid that I should escape, why do you not bind me?"

Interlarded with these invectives, writes Lowe, would be heard the Admiral's voice protesting that Napoleon "was misinformed altogether about my proceedings, that I desired nothing more than to render his situation as agreeable as I could, that he must be *mal entouré*, etc." But Napoleon's temper, engendered by his sense of impotence, was heating with friction. He now accused Lowe "of being a mere instrument of the blind hatred of Lord Bathurst".

"Lord Bathurst, Sir," interpolated Lowe, "does not know what blind hatred is."

But the angry rush of French poured on. "He talked", says Lowe, "about our calling him General, said he was Emperor; that,

when England should be no more, and no such name known as Lord Bathurst, he would still be Emperor. He told me he always went out of the way to avoid me, and had twice pretended to be in the bath that he might not see me." Then came further attacks, ending with, "You never commanded armies, you were nothing but a clerk at Staff Headquarters. I had imagined I should be well among the English, but you are not an Englishman."

Lowe — now, to O'Meara's watchful eye, showing signs of increasing agitation — was aware that Napoleon was deliberately trying to exasperate him to the point of drawing his sword, and so bring about his resignation. It is evident that the Admiral, still outwardly calm, but horrified at the cruelty of these attacks on his colleague, was using every conversational expedient to try to hold the situation steady, to prevent Napoleon from tearing decorum entirely to pieces. But his efforts were useless; and afterwards Napoleon "expressed particular pleasure" at this chance of abusing Lowe before Pulteney. So now, when Lowe protested that Napoleon "did not know him", that, if he did, he would change his opinion, Napoleon hurled back, "Know you, Sir . . . how could I know you? People make themselves known by their actions, by commanding in battles. You have never commanded in battle. You have never commanded any but vagabond Corsican deserters, Piedmontese, and Neapolitan brigands. I know the name of every English General who has distinguished himself, but I never heard of you except as a clerk to Blücher or as a commandant of brigands. You have never commanded or been accustomed to men of honour."

"You make me smile, Sir," retorted Lowe.

"How smile, Sir?" at the same time, says Lowe, "turning round with surprise at the remark, and, looking at me." "I say what I think," added Napoleon.

"Yes, Sir . . . you force me to *smile*; your misconception of my character and the rudeness of your manners excite my pity. I wish you good day," and without any other farewell he went.

The Admiral "with a salute of the hat" followed him.

This was the last interview between Napoleon and Hudson Lowe. Napoleon refused ever to see him again, for he realized

that, as regards his St. Helena campaign, in Lowe he had met his Wellington.

10

Napoleon had attacked Lowe with all the piled-up extravagance of a man who is frantic at his own sense of impotence, but, as seen afterwards in the clarity of reflection, he was not altogether satisfied with the figure he had cut in this Sunday interview, and the next day admitted to Las Cases that during the conversation he had "seriously and repeatedly offended Sir Hudson Lowe; and he also did him the justice to acknowledge that Sir Hudson Lowe had never precisely shown any want of respect; he had contented himself with muttering between his teeth". When Napoleon made this admission he was walking with Las Cases in the garden, and, as they came to the place where the verbal battle had taken place, Napoleon exclaimed, "I must receive this officer no more, he puts me in a passion . . . expressions escape me which would have been unworthy of me at the Tuileries; if they can at all be excused here, it is because I am in his hands and subject to his power. . . . It would have been more worthy of me . . . finer and greater, to have expressed all these things with composure; they would, besides, have been more impressive."

The portrait of Lowe by Wyvill, a portrait said by a contemporary to be exactly like him, is a clear advertisement of a man who, if slightly doctrinaire, was equable, perspicacious, and humane. Even allowing for these qualities, no man insulted to the point that he had been but would be raw with indignation, and when O'Meara, a few days later, was sent for to Plantation House he found the Governor, who was sauntering along a path in the garden, still incensed by Napoleon's rough handling. Lowe, finding that Napoleon had repeated the Sunday's conversation to O'Meara, remarked, so as to reinstate himself at least in the doctor's eyes, that "though he had not commanded an army against Napoleon, yet he had probably done him more mischief, by the advice and information which he had given, prior to and during the conferences at Châtillon, . . . than if he had commanded against him. That what *he* had pointed out had been acted upon afterwards, and was the cause of his downfall from the throne."

He ended by telling O'Meara he would like Napoleon to know these facts, "in order to give him some cause for his hatred". O'Meara observes that after Lowe had delivered himself of this he "walked about for a short time biting his nails".

But in spite of Napoleon's intolerable behaviour Lowe did not by one iota relax his efforts to do all he could to render his life at Longwood agreeable. In fact, this very December we read of him writing to the Government recommending "the lessening of the existing restrictions".

It is impossible, without knowing all the minutiae that led to Lowe's decisions over any given incident, to say whether at times he clung with unnecessary rigidity to his instructions from Lord Bathurst. There was, for instance, the question of a book in several volumes sent him for Napoleon by the author, Mr. Hobhouse (later, Lord Broughton), but accompanied by a note in which Hobhouse said "he takes the liberty of begging that, if it be thought improper to give them at all to the person for whom they are destined, Sir H. Lowe will afford them a place in his own library". As the author had written within one of the volumes *Imperatori Napoleon*, and as Lowe was under strict instructions that Napoleon was to be called General Bonaparte, and his imperial title never either used or recognized, he did not consider it proper to forward the book. The inevitable screams at once arose from Longwood. But as Napoleon received whole cases full of books — both English and French — from England, the only reason he made such a fuss over this particular one was that it provided another weapon with which to attack the Governor.

Inevitably from time to time other small incidents arose in which Lowe had to exercise his own judgment — questions of letters, private passports, visitors, and so on — incidents which, involving no actual hardships to the Longwood group, were invariably twisted by them out of their natural proportions and made to appear monstrous.

As for Lowe himself, he was almost as much a prisoner among the rocks of St. Helena as was Napoleon. His wife was a beautiful and exceptionally intelligent woman, now about to have a baby, and, not knowing anything to the contrary, we may believe that his married life, in all its *éclat* of newness, was happy.

Plantation House and its tree-shaded grounds too were full of charm ; but everything for him must inevitably have been soured by the ceaseless disagreeableness, the deliberate perverseness and misinterpretations issuing from Longwood. After months of endeavour to establish a reasonable *modus vivendi*, he must have realized the complete impossibility of ever reconciling what the English Government allowed with what Napoleon demanded.

Wedged between the two, he was abused, when living, by Napoleon ; and when dead, by his country.

II

Annoyed with himself at his lack of self-control during his Sunday interview with Lowe, Napoleon, a few days later, sent him as a kind of self-justification a long letter which he had dictated to Montholon, in which he voiced all his grievances. A translation of this letter was ultimately published in London, and was so avidly read that it ran into several editions. It may be regarded as the foundation-stone of the sentimental edifice that became gradually built up round the prisoner of the Atlantic.

Actually, the accusations in this letter all bore the authentic Longwood stamp : perversion of truth. It was in part a protest against the Treaty of August 1815 concluded between England, Austria, Russia, and Prussia. "The Emperor Napoleon protests against the contents of this treaty. He is not the prisoner of England, etc. etc." He then summed up his complaints against "this rock", saying "it is, at the same time, the driest and the dampest country in the world". (Actually, Napoleon had told Las Cases that "after all, taking one place of exile with another, St. Helena was perhaps the best. In high latitudes we should have suffered greatly from cold, and in any other island of the tropics we should have expired miserably under the scorching rays of the sun. This rock is wild and barren, no doubt the climate is monstrous and unwholesome, but the temperature, it must be confessed, is *douce*.")

Napoleon went on to complain that, as his letters, sent or received, had to be censored, this deprived him entirely of hearing from his relatives. He said, "We are prohibited from

receiving the *Morning Chronicle*, the *Morning Post*, or any French papers ; occasionally a few odd numbers of *The Times* are sent to Longwood ". (In answer to this, Lowe asserts that " General Bonaparte once sent a message to him requesting him to send him the *Morning Chronicle*, and he immediately sent the whole of those which he had then in his possession. No application was ever made to him to subscribe either to the *Morning Chronicle* or the *Morning Post*, or to any French journal. Had such an application been made he would have made the application known to his Government. It has not been odd numbers of *The Times* newspaper, but regular series of them, which have been constantly sent, the Governor never having kept back a single number.")

Besides the pretended lack of newspapers, Napoleon complained of the paucity of books : " A few books were sent to us, but all such as related to the events of late years were carefully taken away. Since then we have endeavoured to obtain direct from a London bookseller such books as we might want . . . but this has been prevented." (Sir Hudson Lowe wrote that " the new books sent [for Napoleon] consisted of several hundred volumes. . . . The Governor is not aware of any books whatever being omitted which could be obtained of those inserted in the list. No application was ever made to the Governor to correspond with a bookseller in London to send out books. An application has been recently made to correspond with a bookseller on the Continent, and this has been forwarded to his Government to determine on." Lowe had also, in the most agreeable manner, put his own collection of nearly two thousand French books at Napoleon's disposal.)

Napoleon said the restrictions as to where he could go unaccompanied on the island would, " according to the opinion of the physicians [that is, of the pliable Barry O'Meara], shorten the life of the Emperor ". (Besides almost twelve miles which he had for riding or driving unaccompanied by an English officer, he had all but four miles of his own grounds where he could walk without meeting anyone.)

In this letter Napoleon pretends that a tent in the garden had only just been erected for him (whereas one had been put up before by Cockburn's sailors) : he complains that Longwood is

“ by no means fit for a constant residence ” (when, as we have seen, he refused to have a house built elsewhere) : complains that “ the table of the Emperor is barely supplied with what is strictly necessary ”. (Even when, owing to the great expense to the English Government of keeping some fifty French people, the allowance of food was reduced, they kept, as Napoleon himself admitted to Gourgaud, “ a good table ”, while another day he told his chamberlain that he, Gourgaud, was lucky in that he had “ excellent food ”.

Even the reduced rate was — for Napoleon, his staff of four, the two Generals’ wives and their children — remarkably liberal. They had 7 bottles of Claret and 2 of Graves a day ; in addition to 26 of Champagne, 11 of Constantia, 23 of Madeira, 4 of Malaga, 10 of Brandy, 3 of Rum, 3 of Liquors, 8 of syrup of orange, a month. The servants had 21 bottles of Cape wine a day, and 7 of Teneriffe a month. The allowance of meat, presumably for the whole household, was 75 pounds of beef or mutton a day, and 22 roasts a month. In addition there were 7 chickens a day, and 2 dishes of fish (when procurable) and 9 hams and 9 tongues a month. These, no doubt, were only for Napoleon and his own people.

Among a whole list of other items supplied every month there were 6 pots of preserves, 9 jars of olives, 30 pounds of cheese, 45 pounds of sugar, 240 pounds of candied sugar, 30 pounds of dried fruits, 30 pounds of tea. Napoleon’s chef so excelled in all *pâtisseries* that the exiles ate only his, scorning what they could have had in addition from the shops on the island.

There appear to have been certain occasions when they had reason to complain of the quality or punctuality of the catering, but these occasions were rare, and in general there is no doubt they were excellently fed.)

Pheasants were a rarity at St. Helena, but whenever Lowe had any to eat himself he always made a point of sharing them with Napoleon. Another of his efforts to establish pleasanter relations with Longwood was to send his prisoner “ a little chest of Bourbon coffee, of superior quality, expressing the desire that this offering should be accepted as a testimony of his respect, and of the care he would exert to anticipate the least desires of the General ”.

Montholon, who tells of the incident, snorts at this " inexplicable behaviour " of the Governor, and says he even " hesitated to transmit this strange message . . . but to my great astonishment the Emperor said, ' Have this chest taken to the pantry : good coffee is precious in this horrible place.' "

At various times the Emperor purposely had some of his silver plate broken up and sold at Jamestown so as to give an impression to the world of his pretended necessitous condition. Gourgaud told Lowe that this breaking-up of the plate was " a most unworthy trick ", adding that " they had abundance of money ".

At the end of Napoleon's letter to Lowe he exclaims, " Do not your Ministers know, Sir, that the sight of a great man struggling with adversity is the sublimest of spectacles ? Do they not know that Napoleon, on the island of St. Helena, in the midst of persecutions of every kind, to which he opposes only the most perfect serenity, is greater, more sacred, more to be venerated, than when, seated on the greatest throne of the world, he was so long the arbitrator of Kings ? "

And one is left astounded that a mind so richly comprehensive could lend itself to such vapourings. Ossian may have been accountable.

In a despatch to Lord Bathurst at the end of August, in which Lowe refers to Napoleon's insulting behaviour, he says : " In all matters that relate to myself I naturally feel reluctant to adopt any measure which might be considered as proceeding from motives of personal resentment for the treatment I have myself endured. This sentiment has hitherto restrained me in all my proceedings towards Bonaparte ; and in proportion as he has endeavoured to provoke me to some act of violence towards him, I have used a correspondent effort to preserve my temper and to render his design abortive."

A sincere man ; to judge by his laborious diction, at times, perhaps, a wearisome man.

As the weeks went by, the foreign Commissioners were becoming more and more restive at the apparent impossibility of getting so much as a fleeting glance at the man whom they had come to St. Helena for the express purpose of seeing ; and when, in

October, O'Meara dined one evening at Plantation House, the Russian and Austrian Commissioners fastened on him as a whipping-boy for their complaints, protesting "that they should be objects of ridicule in Europe as soon as it was known they had been so many months in St. Helena without ever once seeing the individual, to ascertain whose presence was the sole object of their mission. That the Governor always replied to their questions that Bonaparte had refused to receive any person whatsoever."

12

The idea latent in Napoleon's mind, that he might possibly be able to irritate Lowe to the point when he would draw his sword and so ensure his dismissal from the post of Governor, arose in part from a trick Lowe had, when agitated, of hitching his sword up under his left arm. O'Meara explained to the Emperor that this was merely a harmless trick, but he refused to believe it. This misconstruction on Napoleon's part was only one instance of the way he chose to misrepresent everything Lowe said or did, always looking for some sinister motive behind the most innocuous action. He was encouraged in this attitude by his suite, who inflamed every incident and then ran with it to their chief; and later, when Las Cases and Lowe became on better terms, Las Cases himself admitted this, confessing to the Governor that he and the others "had represented everything to General Bonaparte *par une voile de sang*".

But with the somersaults of an exasperated mind that only finds relief in exaggeration, Napoleon clung tenaciously to the idea that England was out to murder him. He even pretended that if the soldiers and sailors at St. Helena were employed to build him a new house, this in itself might lead to his assassination. "I do not wish", he protested, "to incur the hatred of those poor fellows who are already sufficiently miserable by having been sent to this detestable place, and harassed in the manner they are. They will load me with execrations, supposing me to be the author of all their hardships, and perhaps may wish to put an end to me." In vain O'Meara tried to enlighten him as to the English mentality. Napoleon's views on the British nation were, in fact, at times

grotesque. Having been told the English were given to incest, he remarked gravely, "That comes, perhaps, from their reading the Bible too much".

Like all who are themselves devious, he invariably suspected a hidden motive in the simplest action of others, and would pursue this theory to the most extraordinary conclusions. For instance, Lady Holland — she and her husband having an admiration for the Emperor — persuaded the Duke of Bedford to send Napoleon a book. The Duke, writes Lord Holland, "left the choice of it to her, and she delayed it till the day before the ship was to sail. She consequently requested a friend to purchase the first well-bound book that came to hand in the bookseller's shop, and as it was a Scotch hand that it came to, Robertson's *History of Scotland* was naturally enough the book selected.

"Why does the Duke of Bedford send me the *History of Scotland*?" queried Napoleon, when this present arrived. "He must know that I have read it. Oh . . . he means to hint to me never to acknowledge, like Mary Queen of Scots, the jurisdiction of England."

Napoleon's conclusive reverse from power to impotence, from teeming interests to meaningless hours; his intricate mentality aimlessly revolving with nothing to work on, mulcted of any chance of further manipulation of the affairs of the world; the constant irritation in his mind against Lowe and Lord Bathurst: all this was beginning to tell. Disturbances were apparent in his once tenacious system; there was a loosening, a lack of concord in what before had been rhythmic and compact. In O'Meara's daily journal entries constantly appear such as "Napoleon in his bath. Complained of headache and general uneasiness, and was a little feverish", or "Examined his gums, which were spongy and pale and bled on the slightest touch", or "Napoleon indisposed: one of his cheeks considerably tumefied. Recommended fomentation and steaming of the part affected which he put into practice", or "Napoleon sent for me. Found him sitting in a chair opposite to the fire. He had gone out to walk, and was seized with rigors, headache, severe cough". The English Government was, of course, responsible. Did his face swell; Lord Bathurst had placed him in the wind: had he neuralgia; England had not provided

him with sufficiently shady trees : did his general health suffer from too close confinement to the house ; it was all Lowe's fault for not extending the twelve-mile limit. To emphasize his condition, which he chose to consider was the fault of his surroundings, he demanded from Lowe an invalid chair. The Governor replied that there was not such a thing in the island, but that he would have one made, and Gourgaud was finally called on to design it. Meanwhile Napoleon got such physical and mental *soulagement* as he could by sitting for hours at a time soaking in his hot bath, gutting now one book, now another, and then hurling it across the floor.

13

As one pushes one's way through the St. Helena memoirs of Las Cases, Gourgaud, Montholon, and O'Meara, one has the impression of actually taking part in the life at Longwood : now one hears the continuous hiss of tropical rain as it streams downwards, enveloping house, garden, bushes, and tent in a humid blur ; now one sees the same scene aquiver with heat, a too generous blessing of sunshine embracing all objects, making the wooden walls of the built-on drawing-room contract, burning onto the roof, hotly pressing upon every leaf and blade of grass, while any passing figure crossing the courtyard or stepping out of one of the French windows hurries onto any little carpet of shade flung by the house. When these casual figures are the Longwood grooms or valets we see them in exact replicas of the liveries they used to wear at the Tuileries : the grooms in green and gold ; the *maître d'hôtel* in a green coat embroidered with silver, a white waistcoat, black silk knee-breeches, and buckled shoes ; Napoleon's two bedroom valets, dressed the same except that their embroidery is of gold. The other valets, lolling here and there in the rooms and passages, were also in livery. Twelve of these valets were actually English sailors supplied by Cockburn to make up the required number. They too wore the French livery. And at every turn would be met one or other of the fifty Chinamen who acted as gardeners, kitchen-boys, and house-boys. During the early part of Napoleon's stay at Longwood, arresting

the eye among these sophisticated uniforms and flat-faced Chinamen, was a Lascar servant belonging to Gourgaud. This decorative figure silently padding about with his dusky face and light, air-stirred draperies had an unique visual value, and loud were Gourgaud's lamentations when Sir Hudson Lowe said the fellow must go.

On these days of tropical heat Napoleon would go out riding at six o'clock, and as his horse picked its way over the delicate morning shadows cast by the gumwood bushes, Las Cases, riding at his side, would continue his efforts at teaching him English. "Today", writes Las Cases one early spring day in 1816, "the Emperor read the article on Egypt in the *Encyclopædia*", and was so delighted at accomplishing this that he said "several times in the day how pleased he was at his progress". That afternoon, "at four o'clock", continues Las Cases, "I followed the Emperor into the garden; we walked about there alone for a time; soon after others joined us. The air was noticeably soft. The Emperor remarked on the peacefulness of our solitude: it was Sunday, none of the workmen were about."

Then came the hour of Napoleon's late afternoon drive. The sound of a calash and six horses was heard drawing up at the door. As Napoleon went towards the house he caught sight of "the little Hortense, Madame Bertrand's daughter, whom he delighted in: he made her come up to him, kissed her tenderly two or three times, and wished to take her in the carriage with Montholon's little Tristan", and then, while they were all borne along through the serene quiet of the evening, one of the company began describing some caricatures which he had just come across in a newspaper. Actually, it must have been difficult to carry on any consecutive conversation during these drives, as Napoleon had the horses go at a gallop, and the pace was such, says Madame de Montholon, who was often seated in the carriage with the Emperor, that "it was enough to make one lose one's breath". On they rushed; Bertrand and Gourgaud thundering along on horseback on either side in their great swashbuckler boots, the plumes in their cocked hats streaming backwards above their French faces. The rate was so precipitate that in a quarter of an hour they had completed the whole circuit of the plateau and were back at their starting point:

so round they would go again as frantically as ever — a swirling circus of escapists nursing an illusion of liberation which regularly every quarter of an hour was dissipated.

The altercations with Plantation House continued ; were in fact incessant. Bertrand, who acted as Napoleon's mouthpiece and liaison between him and the Governor, would deliberately misconstrue Lowe's messages and intentions. Lowe, finding himself misrepresented and pelted with protests and insulting remarks originating from Napoleon, would become exasperated, and, anxious to impose himself, but equally anxious to treat Napoleon with every consideration, would hesitate, explain, and fumble : fresh misunderstandings would follow, and finally the whole situation would pass into a miasma of ambiguity. Napoleon perversely refused ever to believe in Lowe's patently good intentions, and when the true explanation of some rumpus was given him would merely toss off some exclamation such as " It was all a trick ! "

In addition to these dissensions there were constant tiffs among Napoleon's little Court of four. From the outset the three Generals, Bertrand, Montholon, and Gourgaud, resented the presence of Las Cases, and eyed the Jesuit, as they called him, with suspicion. Las Cases had seen no military service under Napoleon, he had been merely a Chamberlain and Councillor of State ; why, therefore, they asked, should he have pushed himself in among them, why should Napoleon always like to have this middle-aged, sinuous-minded fellow at his elbow ?

Even Napoleon himself, when he came to think of it, felt slightly puzzled as to actually why Las Cases should be with him, and this devotee must have inwardly winced when one day his Emperor summed up the reasons why the various members of his St. Helena Court should be sharing his exile. " Bertrand . . . is henceforth identified with my existence. It has become historic. Gourgaud was my first orderly officer ; he is my handiwork, my offspring. Montholon is the son of Sémonville, a brother-in-law of Joubert, a child of the Revolution and the camps. You, *mon cher* . . . you . . . " Here Napoleon paused, and then exclaimed, " But you, *mon cher*, if it comes to the point, by what devil of a chance are you here ? " But Las Cases had a glib tongue. " Sire, by the

good fortune of my star, and for the honour of the emigration."

Entangled with Las Cases' enthusiasm for the Emperor was enthusiasm for his own interests, and in all the agitation of Napoleon's capture off the coast of France, and the uncertainty as to what was to be his fate, Las Cases had had the shrewdness to make use of the emotionalism of the moment to demand for himself the Cross of the Legion of Honour. Being with Napoleon in the boat that was taking him to the *Bellerophon*, Las Cases seized the opportunity to ask for the decoration, saying it would give him a better appearance if he was wearing it when he arrived in England. Napoleon agreed; and Las Cases then bought a gold cross of the Legion from Napoleon's valet, Marchand, who conveniently happened to have one in his baggage.

Gourgaud was perhaps the one who was the most incensed with Las Cases. Arrived at Longwood, questions at once arose as to precedence at dinner: jealousies as to which of the four was receiving most attention from Napoleon. Bertrand and Las Cases represented the older men; Montholon and Gourgaud the younger; and of them all Gourgaud was the only one who had no family to occupy him: Bertrand and Montholon had their wives and children, Las Cases his son. Gourgaud had nothing but his own broodings, his growing *ennui*, his increasing resentment at Napoleon's not making more fuss over himself.

Gourgaud's achievements as a soldier had been spectacular; he had been as competent as he had been brave: and he did not mean Napoleon to forget it. Added to the battles in which he had distinguished himself, the wounds he had received, the retreat from Russia which he had endured, he had on one occasion saved his Emperor's life by killing a Cossack just about to attack him, a pictorial representation of which incident Gourgaud had had engraved on his sword. He was a likeable, single-minded young man. He trusted life: it had never so much as occurred to him that the dividends of a generous action could be other than secure. He had two profound affections: one for his mother of seventy; the other for the Emperor. That quality of life, swifter, more potent, more exhilarating than that of other men, which dazzled about Napoleon had completely subjugated the younger man, and in return for the energy he himself had expended on the

Emperor's behalf he expected to receive a steady and grateful affection ; he imagined his god would always bear in mind the exploits of his young General's military career with the same nostalgic enthusiasm with which he remembered them himself. He was to find that this was an erroneous assumption. He did not appreciate the difference between remembered benefits and immediate necessity ; did not grasp the fact that, though he was younger than Las Cases, Napoleon conjugated him in the past tense, and Las Cases in the present. Faced by the injured young man's constant references to his military services, Napoleon's mind would shift about uneasily, only too well aware that in the St. Helena campaign on which he was now embarked — on one side his fight with boredom, and on the other his efforts to slander Lowe and the English Government — Las Cases did much the better staff work. Las Cases, part sincere, part wily, supplied, too, a human mirror in which Napoleon could still view himself in gigantic proportions, still receive the assurance that he was a Colossus. Las Cases was besides a most entertaining *raconteur*, and, eager as Napoleon now was to learn English, he possessed in his Chamberlain the only one of his Court who both wrote and spoke it. As for the vendetta with Lowe, Las Cases accommodat-ingly received any impression Napoleon chose to stamp on his mind regarding the Governor. Added to these amenities there was in his temperament something that exhaled a feminine atmosphere, he possessed some particular endowment that supplied to Longwood life a *douceur* of which, as far as Napoleon was concerned, Madame Bertrand and Madame de Montholon — though each had her charm — appear to have been non-conductors.

Gourgaud had the simple sincerity of a child, and this very honesty was an obstruction to his becoming the subtle instrument for malignity and mischief-making which was what the Emperor now required of his Generals. Soon after their arrival in the island Gourgaud remarks, with bland surprise, that Napoleon "wished us to complain to everyone of the English Government, of the Admiral, etc." Napoleon had apparently applied to Cockburn about some improvements in the Longwood stables, as a few days later in Gourgaud's diary there comes the entry : "The Admiral gave orders regarding the stables, and was altogether

very obliging, but the Emperor charged Montholon to tell him he is very much dissatisfied, that he (the Admiral) behaves badly to us, that he is a murderer". Another time Gourgaud reveals a further example of Napoleon's technique of misrepresentation. Judge Strange, stopping at St. Helena on his way from India, was anxious to pay a visit to Longwood. Napoleon refused to see him. "The Emperor", wrote Gourgaud, "thinks that to receive no one will produce a good effect : it creates a sombre and sinister atmosphere."

Gourgaud had flung himself onto Napoleon's South Atlantic rock with the same romantic ardour with which he before had flung himself into battle, but, unsupported by any marked affection from his master, in fact, painfully aware of the Emperor's growing indifference, as the days, the weeks, the months slowly meandered along, boredom began to strangle enthusiasm. For him, as for the other men of Napoleon's suite, the most vital occupation that Longwood offered was writing down the Emperor's campaigns at his dictation. The first summer was not through before Gourgaud's diary began to reverberate to his cries of *Ennui ! ennui !* "Dinner depressing, evening lugubrious" runs one entry. And then, "Thursday June 6th. As boring a day as usual. The Governor paid me a visit in my room ; he was remarkably agreeable."

"Wednesday 12th. The Emperor depressed. He gave me a further dictation on Waterloo : walk, chess."

"Saturday, 22nd. Depression. . . . The weather bad."

"Tuesday, 25th. *Ennui, ennui !* Wednesday 26th *idem*. Thursday 27th *idem*. Friday 28th *idem*. Saturday 29th *idem*. Sunday 30th *grand ennui*", and on July 5th, "I am suffocated with *ennui*".

So was Napoleon himself. "Oh ! what boredom day after day ! What a cross !" he exclaimed one evening as he sat playing chess. "It was hard for him," remarks Lord Rosebery, "but he had been hard on the world."

Even when Gourgaud was actually with the Emperor, the sense of interminable flatness that life at Longwood engendered was not always dispersed, as on the days when the Emperor was himself depressed or feeling ill he would sit after dinner playing

chess or doing nothing in complete silence, providing no vivacity for the others to feed on.

"*What time is it ?*" he suddenly demanded on one of these vacuous evenings when he was silently playing chess.

"Ten o'clock."

"*How long the nights are !*"

"And the days, Sire !" groaned Gourgaud.

About the room some or all of Napoleon's Court would be posed, the women sitting, the men standing : for Napoleon was relentless in enforcing this compliment to himself : he would keep them standing for three hours, for four. . . . Madame de Montholon says that on occasions she had noticed Gourgaud, his face growing whiter and whiter, at last forced to prop himself against a door. There then, sitting or standing, they would be ; this person in one position, that one in another, silently battling each with his or her own special form of gloom, waiting and craving for their life-giver to start talking. But once the tones of that voice which Lord Holland thought Napoleon's chief charm ("sweet, spirited, and persuasive in the highest degree") impinged on the silence, when he began to take fire from his subject, his face to respond to the thoughts that flickered behind, then the diversity, the pungency, the stirring quality of his mind so swept his listeners into the vortex of his own ardency that, says Las Cases, "in an instant we had got to eleven o'clock and beyond ; those were our good evenings".

Enthusiastic, exploring, decisive, his mind drilled into every subject and laid it bare ; and if his thoughts only occasionally lifted from the material standpoint, the Machiavellian view, his listeners' own minds were not of such a nature that they discerned any lack. There is a sense of freshness in all that he said which even now vivifies as one reads. One is aware of being in contact with a spirit that energetically lives and breathes from its own lambent centre, that is never for a moment deflected by the conventional or the pedantic ; a spirit swiftly responsive to the conceptions, the combinations of ideas every moment blowing across it. As a companion he must have been stimulating to a degree. Veracity he did not strictly consider. On board the *Northumberland* he had even flown at Gourgaud for telling Cock-

burn that he had not held chief command on the 13 *Vendémiaire* ; for, unknown to Gourgaud, Napoleon had already told Cockburn that he had.

"I did not know that your Majesty had spoken about it," protested the young man ; "the Admiral questioned me, and I told the truth."

"The Emperor", writes Gourgaud, "got angrier and angrier, desired me not to talk to the Admiral any more ; if he questioned me I must not reply." And then, with Napoleon's usual injustice when his vanity was injured, he even shot out at this faithful follower, "The next thing will be your going over into the service of the English !"

Now, at St. Helena, Napoleon's range of subjects was as varied as it was unpredictable — his own youth ; the liberty of the press ; medicine ; changes in military technique ; mesmerism ; the Legion of Honour ; his mistresses ; the difference between sleep and death ; his Court ; domestic happiness ; the characters of his various Ministers ; military bulletins ; the amazing good temper of both his wives ; financial administration ; his Generals ; the *accouchement* of Marie Louise ; comparison between the English and the French Revolutions ; the Gauls ; the marvels of nature ; the inadequacy of Chinese ships ; the definition of madness ; fortifications ; titles and decorations ; imagination ; the plague in Egypt ; and, needless to say, all his campaigns and their thousand attendant incidents. In the warm stillness of these tropical evenings Waterloo was fought and re-fought and fought again ; needless to say, to the reversal of its actual conclusion : "*Ah, si c'était à recommencer !*", and another day, "Peculiar defeat," he remarked, "when in spite of the most horrible catastrophe, the glory of the vanquished has not suffered in the least, nor that of the victor been augmented."

And at St. Helena Gourgaud, who often acted as amanuensis for the Emperor's military memoirs,¹ told a friend that "under

¹ Napoleon also dictated his military memoirs to Las Cases, Montholon, and Bertrand. Philippe Connard says of Napoleon's writing that he "did not endeavour to make his works brilliant and eloquent but, above everything, clear and persuasive . . . it is the eloquence of deeds, not words." *Les Origines de la Légende Napoléonienne*, p. 77-8.

Napoleon's directions he had written a full account of the Waterloo campaign, but that it had never been finished, as Napoleon could never decide upon the best way of ending the great battle ; that he, Gourgaud, had suggested no less than six different ways, but none were satisfactory."

"Destiny did not wish", Napoleon told his listeners, "that my work to consecrate the social reorganization of Europe should be completed : she brought me here" — and then, without any sense of his comicality, he added — "but the mystery of her actions is impenetrable."

And another day, in the same vein, he exclaimed to Las Cases, "It's a very remarkable thing, the obstacles that have foiled me have not come from men at all ; they have all come from the elements : in the South, the sea was my undoing : in the North, the conflagration of Moscow, the winter ice : thus water, air, and fire, the whole of nature, and nothing but nature — these are what have been the enemies of a universal regeneration commanded by nature herself ! . . . The problems of Providence are insoluble ! . . ."

In all his conversation self-admiration was the dominant note ; but this exaltation of himself was not displeasing to his listeners. On the contrary. They themselves shone only by his light : the more omnipotent he made himself appear in their eyes, so much the more justified they felt in having marooned themselves with him on his island.

We, to whom it is a commonplace of modern life to see continental dictators straddling empires, have to stretch our imagination to realize what an astounding phenomenon Napoleon was to his contemporaries. To them he was a fresh creation of nature ; a new product ; the man who, risen from nothing, had yet successfully pitted himself against the whole European order, juggled with monarchies, and browbeaten kings. He had out-rivalled Charlemagne. And now his St. Helena Court had the felicity of chattering in delicious intimacy with this world-conjuror, of hearing him expatiate on and explain his own *legerdemain*. Napoleon was well aware of the *éclat* companionship with himself ("the ornament of history", to use his own words) gave to this cluster of the faithful who, grouped round him in their

now faded and shabby Parisian clothes, helped him to support his solitude. He told them that even at St. Helena he "still bestowed crowns ! . . . Yes, *mes chers amis*, when you return to Europe you will find yourselves crowned !"

On some evenings at Longwood, instead of reminiscing, Napoleon would be entirely the literary enthusiast : reader and critic in one : extracting from the tragedies of the theatre a kind of balm for his own tragedy ; "for ever becoming more enraptured with Racine" : and if at times his audience grew restive under the constant re-reading of his favourite pieces, his criticisms were at least charged with vitality. After reading out to Las Cases some of the Iliad, he averred that it was "like Genesis and the Bible, the token and testimony of the time. Homer in his work was poet, orator, historian, legislator, geographer, theologian ; he was the encyclopaedia of his epoch." It would be interesting to know whether he varied his more serious readings with fairy-tales, for these had an immense fascination for him. On his bookshelves at Elba forty-one volumes of fairy-tales were discovered. Sometimes at St. Helena he would read out the Scriptures, but using them as a kind of diary of his own military prowess. One evening he asked, "What shall we read tonight ?" and was met by a demand for the Bible. "It is certainly very edifying," remarked Napoleon ; and he began to read aloud the Book of Judith, "observing at nearly every place, every town or village that he named, 'I camped out there : I took that post by assault : I gave battle in that place, etc. etc.' " His naïvety in fact was at times extraordinary. "*Les bons soldats, la superbe bataille !*" he exclaimed one day, referring to Austerlitz, "great results acquired in the presence of three emperors !"

Napoleon, the Prince Regent, and Byron may be cited as the three notorious egoists of their day ; and Napoleon, like most egoists, was entirely self-deceived. In his own mind he saw his thirst for self-glorification as a worthy ambition, "the greatest and the most exalted there has perhaps ever been : that, in fine, of establishing, of perpetuating the empire of reason, and the full exercise, the entire enjoyment of all the human faculties". And another day, talking of how he had placed his relations on the thrones of Europe, and foreseeing the blame that might be

attached to him in consequence, he protested blandly, "But the laws of morality and the European situation demanded it!"

His fatuousness was extraordinary. "If I have to fear a reproach from posterity and history," he remarked one day, "it will not be for having been too bad but, perhaps, for having been too good"; and on another occasion, discussing the belief in future recompense, "What should I not have the right to!" he exclaimed, "I who have passed through such an extraordinary career . . . without committing a single crime — and I could have committed so many!" And, self-satisfaction swelling within him, he added, "I can appear before the tribunal of God, I can await His judgment without fear!" On this occasion he finished the conversation by sending Emanuel de Las Cases to fetch the New Testament, which as usual he read aloud: "he did not stop till after Jesus' sermon on the mount. He expressed himself ravished, enraptured with the purity, sublimity, and beauty of such a morality . . . and so were we all", concludes Las Cases.

Sometimes, bringing their own harlequin atmosphere with them, Betsy Balcombe and her sister would shoot into Longwood. We read of Napoleon, when one day he was expecting them and they did not appear, leaving the house and gazing through his telescope along the road by which they would come: for to him the wine of life came with them. Impertinent, giggling, irresistible; gabbling to the Emperor as if he were their own age, making faces at Madame de Montholon's back, rushing in and out of the rooms, delighting here and annoying there, they dispersed the lugubriousness of an atmosphere they were too light-hearted even so much as to be aware of.

14

As time went on Napoleon became only too well aware of the cabal of the three Generals against Las Cases, and in his turn became piqued that they should dare to criticize their Emperor for his choice of a companion.

"His conversation pleases me," Napoleon had remarked of Las Cases when, off the coast of England, he had first asked if he might share the Emperor's exile. "He appears to be remarkably

well-informed, and I believe him to be devoted to me. Curious fate his has been ! Twenty-four years ago he emigrated, disguised as a jockey, with the family of Louis XVI, and today he is my Chamberlain, and voluntarily exiles himself with me ! Tell him to come in."

And he had indeed come in. Again and again at Longwood Napoleon would send for the little man to talk to him in the garden, or in his bedroom : for it was there, lying on the sofa, that he spent most of the day. At times, instead of talking to him in the bedroom, Las Cases would be expected to stand interminably in the steam — steam so dense that at times he could barely see — of the bath in which Napoleon was cosily soaking himself while his companion recounted to him all the former gossip of the Faubourg Saint-Germain ; of whose *salons* he had been an intimate, and Napoleon an outsider. On one occasion, Napoleon choosing to take his dinner in his bath, Las Cases was given his on a little table by his side. There was undeniably an entertaining and seductive quality about this representative of Saint-Germain ; and at Longwood Napoleon was avid for entertainment.

As we have seen, the man the most incensed against his partiality for his Chamberlain was Gourgaud, and in the secrecy of his, or his colleagues', rooms he would groan over the situation. " Monthonlon came to have coffee with me ", Gourgaud wrote one day in the middle of their first July on the island. " The Emperor has told him that no one must show himself jealous of the others. If we league ourselves together, as it appears we are doing, against Las Cases, he will show coldness to the leaguers and redouble his attentions to Las Cases."

" I consider I have some rights to the Emperor's friendship," Gourgaud burst out. " At thirty-two I lost a profession that I loved, I gave up my country, my family, to follow him. . . . Las Cases is neither intellectual nor scientific, he has never seen service in the battlefields. . . . I will not let myself be deposed by him."

The young man then carried his disgruntlement to the Grand Marshal and his wife. Bertrand tried to console him. " The Emperor is like that, my dear Gourgaud, we cannot change his character. . . . It is this character of his which is the reason why

he has no friends, why he has made so many enemies, and, in fine, why we are at St. Helena."

"It seems to me", Gourgaud protested to Napoleon another day in front of Las Cases, "that I ought not to be worse treated at St. Helena than I was in prosperous times; that then his Majesty showed me the very greatest kindness, and that it is the remembrance of this that causes me so much grief when I compare it to the way he behaves at present."

"The Emperor", Gourgaud noted in his diary, "at moments became angry, would then revert to the sovereign, and at other moments showed me real attachment. Las Cases did not open his mouth the whole time, even when I told him he had no right to his Majesty's kindness, not having fought under him. The Emperor ended by saying that we were all equal and ought to live like brothers; and then went back into the house. At four o'clock he came out and sent for me to come to the garden: he seemed sad but not angry."

The finale to this awkward scene was that after dinner Napoleon and his *entourage* had "a very animated conversation on the marvels of nature".

On Napoleon's birthday, August the 15th, Gourgaud made up a bouquet for the Emperor, saying "it was from the King of Rome"; Napoleon merely retorted, "Bah! the King of Rome does not think any more about me now than about . . . [*sic*]."

But except for this snub, this, Napoleon's first birthday on the island, was a day dipped for the little group of French people in a kind of nostalgic sweetness. "We had arranged", says Las Cases, "for all of us to present ourselves before him at eleven o'clock: he foiled us by appearing gaily at our doors at nine. He made himself most charming: he went into the garden; everyone in succession congregated there: the Grand Marshal, his wife and children arrived: the Emperor breakfasted, surrounded by his faithful, under the large and beautiful tent which is a real and blessed acquisition. The day was remarkably pleasant, himself gay and very talkative; he seemed for these moments to take a pleasure in our good wishes and kind feelings; he wanted, so he told us, to spend the whole day surrounded by all of us — which is what took place, talking, working, and going about on

foot or in the carriage." For, in his more serene moments, Napoleon could shower around him a genuinely benign atmosphere.

15

Though from his own point of view Gourgaud's position continued unsatisfactory, from time to time he was given a spoonful of that imperial honey which made the happiness of his days. "His Majesty treated me charmingly", he writes one day at the end of October; "told me to go riding, said that we must all go out, that we must see the world. Afterwards he dined in his own room, asked for us when he'd finished, made me read Robinson to him, then sent away everyone except me, whom he kept till half-past ten."

But a week or two later the Longwood strains were again evident. One day in the middle of November, "At half-past seven", writes Gourgaud, "Las Cases' son arrived in the drawing-room saying his father was ill. His Majesty displayed great concern. . . . We had dinner. The Emperor sent for news of this poor Las Cases. Ali came back revealing that 'he has gone to bed but hopes to have some soup and a nice slice of chicken'.

"Montholon could not resist crying out, 'Ah, poor man!'

"To which his Majesty made no reply. After dinner he sent the little one to keep the old one company, then again talked of his dear Las Cases. '*It's certainly the annoyances caused by the Governor that have made him ill.*'"

At this Gourgaud pointed out that he too had been made ill by the Governor taking his servant from him, "and that I was three days without anyone to look after me". Napoleon merely started talking about the French Revolution.

But little as Gourgaud could have hoped for a near deliverance from this figure who had become his torment, that deliverance was actually imminent.

On November the 25th Las Cases writes that at about four o'clock the Emperor sent for him to come out, and that then they and some of the others of the group meandered down to "the turning of the alley that leads to the bottom of the garden. A plate was brought with five oranges, sugar and a knife; they are

extremely rare in the island . . . the Emperor is immensely fond of them : these were a present from Lady Malcolm : the Admiral used to repeat this offering whenever he had the opportunity. At the moment there were three of us round the Emperor ; he gave me one of these oranges to put in my pocket for my son, and began to get the others ready by cutting them into slices : and, seated on the trunk of a tree, he began to eat ; gaily and familiarly dealing the slices out to each of us. . . . How far I was, alas, from imagining that this would be the last gift that I would be able to receive from his hand."

When Napoleon went back into the house he made Las Cases come with him, and the two of them started walking up and down from drawing-room to billiard-room. As they strolled to and fro Napoleon began to talk of his marriage to Marie Louise ; then he suddenly stopped and stared out of the window : " a considerable group of English officers ", writes Las Cases, " were coming towards us through the gate of our enclosure : it was the Governor surrounded by a number of his people ".

Bertrand, coming into the room at that moment, remarked that the Governor had already been over in the morning. A few moments later, and a message came for Las Cases that an English officer was waiting for him in his room.

" I made a sign that I was with the Emperor, who several minutes later said, ' Go and see, *mon cher*, what this animal wants you for.' " As Las Cases went off Napoleon called after him, " *And be sure to come back soon.*"

" And these for me ", concludes Las Cases, " were Napoleon's last words. Alas ! I have never seen him again ! His tones, the sound of his voice, are still in my ears." .

Gourgaud, too, looking out of another window, had noticed Poppleton, two orderlies, and one or two other men going towards Las Cases' room, and after several minutes saw them all come out again with Las Cases in the middle, the Chamberlain talking " in a pretty lively manner ".

Gourgaud's mind was in commotion. " I ran hurriedly to Montholon to tell him what had happened. . . . Montholon was walking in the garden with his wife. . . . I told his wife what had just taken place, and counselled her to go to Las Cases' room

to see his son Emanuel. Myself, I ran to find Bertrand — he was with his Majesty."

Shortly after, Napoleon, seeing Gourgaud and Montholon in the garden, called them in and told them that the reason for this abduction was that "letters had been seized on Las Cases' servant, and that this man was to have taken them to Europe".

"The Emperor", writes Gourgaud, "did not seem particularly upset, and played about with the billiard-balls. He enjoined Bertrand to go to the Governor to reclaim Las Cases. The Grand Marshal did not look too pleased: the Montholons stifled their delight: I was the only one who appeared overwhelmed."

Meanwhile Emanuel had been sent for from Longwood to join his father. O'Meara, coming up as he was mounting his horse, asked the boy, down whose face tears were running, if it was true that his father had tried to get some letters off secretly.

"*Que voulez-vous?*" sobbed Emanuel, "we are in such dreadful trouble."

Sir Hudson Lowe had good reason for arresting Las Cases. The Frenchman had had a mulatto servant, James Scott, but in consequence of Las Cases having used him to take a message of some importance to Baroness Stürmer (wife of the Austrian Commissioner), and on consideration that Las Cases had originally taken this man into his service without the sanction of Sir George Cockburn, Lowe had removed him, and offered his master the choice of another valet. On the 25th of November Scott's father had come to see Lowe, telling him that his son had been up to Longwood the day before, and that Las Cases had given him a red waistcoat within the lining of which were sewn up two letters from Las Cases in microscopic writing (the unfortunate Emanuel having been used as amanuensis) on two pieces of white taffeta. One of these letters was for Lady Clavering, the other for Lucien Bonaparte. Lowe, once in possession of these letters, had instantly decided on Las Cases' arrest.

If Napoleon had at first imagined that Las Cases could be reclaimed on the simple demand of his Grand Marshal, he soon found he was mistaken, and his concern increased. Also he was agitated at the thought of all Las Cases' papers — including those

he had himself dictated, and Las Cases' diary of their private and almost daily talks — now being laid bare before the Governor's eye. The day after the arrest, "At half-past six", writes Gourgaud, "his Majesty sent for me, made me sit down as usual. He was extremely depressed and said, 'A man to whom I had given my entire confidence ! who had all my papers ! to behave like that ! to send letters by a slave who could not even go to England without a succession of unusual circumstances.'

"The Emperor, much disturbed, went on into the drawing-room, played chess with me." Napoleon, referring to his having seen Las Cases riding off surrounded by Sir Hudson Lowe's staff, said they looked like "savages of the South Seas dancing round a prisoner they are going to devour". "Depressing dinner," writes Gourgaud, "went to bed at ten o'clock."

It was a Monday on which Las Cases had been arrested, and he and his son had been lodged near Hutt's Gate. On the Wednesday Gourgaud and Madame de Montholon rode that way to try to see the prisoners. "The sentinels prevented us from going by," writes Gourgaud. "Las Cases and his son came out of their door, and made signs to us." When the riders got back they heard that the nurse of the Montholon children had been told that Las Cases was to be sent off to the Cape in two days' time. Meanwhile, several *chasseurs* were on guard at Longwood, sleeping in the drawing-room; and some of Lowe's staff had come to Las Cases' room, taken away the beds, and packed up his belongings in a trunk.

Lowe had sent back to Longwood Las Cases' official papers but neither Las Cases' private diary nor the manuscripts Napoleon had dictated. Napoleon, in great perturbation over this, said that Bertrand would have to go and ask Lowe for these manuscripts, and, if they were refused, find out if Napoleon could write to the Prince Regent on the subject. The Grand Marshal apparently thought all this nonsense, for, says Gourgaud, "Bertrand, in a bad temper, declares to me that he will not go to the Governor and will not write". However, in the end he gave way, but "greatly fearing the delivery of the note will cause a scandal". There is something piteously humorous in Napoleon's conviction that his worries, if they could but once reach the Prince Regent's ears,

would rouse him to action on his behalf; the Regent at the moment being, as ever, completely absorbed in his own private affairs.

The three men now left of Napoleon's group hoped that, Las Cases withdrawn, their own value would go up in their master's eyes; but a week after the arrest Gourgaud is writing, "we are dissatisfied: the Emperor doesn't see us, because they've taken his Las Cases from him: the last come are the most loved!" and still worse, a few days later, Montholon told him he believed "that his Majesty wants to negotiate our exchange for Las Cases".

This brought Gourgaud's feelings to a head, and, Bertrand coming in at the moment, the younger man blurted out to him that "it is very painful to me that his Majesty does not show the slightest interest in us. . . . If the Emperor does not find us to his liking he ought at least to think of the sacrifices we have made to follow him. . . . I have seen him lose Lannes, Bessières, and Duroc; they were good servants, pupils of his Majesty. *Eh bien!* He regretted them less than he does Las Cases."

In the midst of all this upset Lady Lowe, in a fanfare of satin and ostrich feathers, suddenly came driving up to Longwood one day to pay visits to Madame Bertrand and Madame de Montholon. "It is so long", Gourgaud confides to his diary, "since I have seen a woman so sprucely dressed that I was quite wonder-struck at her toilette: blue satin dress bordered with white, white beaver hat with plumes, etc."

Lowe, meanwhile, always genuinely desirous of being on good terms with Napoleon, had been asking O'Meara if he thought "anything could be done" to bring about more friendly relations between him and his charge.

"It appears", remarked Napoleon to Gourgaud, "that there is something new on hand. Hudson Lowe has asked O'Meara what he must do to set things right with us. . . . Perhaps it is the effect on him of Las Cases' diary — what do you think?"

Napoleon, too, was congratulating himself that his own attitude and messages to Lowe regarding Las Cases were gradually intimidating the Governor, and on receiving a secret message from Las Cases that he was being treated by Lowe "*à merveille*",

“Ha ! ha !” exclaimed Napoleon, “I gain ground ! There is no doubt Sir Hudson Lowe is afraid !”

But as for Lowe’s wish to be on better terms with him, Napoleon would not believe it. “He is a very astute man is this Governor. . . . I’ve concocted a splendid letter for Las Cases which will immensely embarrass that functionary. Gourgaud, go and find it and read it out.”

The Montholons happened to be in the room, and Gourgaud, having brought the letter, read it to the company. It began, “Monsieur le Comte de Las Cases . . . your conduct, like your life, has always been honourable”. Then after various observations came, “How many nights you have spent with me during my illnesses !” and such additional praise, that, says Gourgaud, it gave the impression that Las Cases was a martyr. “His Majesty asked me what I thought of it. I frankly gave my opinion that this laudatory and tender style is not suitable from the Emperor to Monsieur de Las Cases whom he has only known a year or eighteen months, and who has made no sacrifice for him, nor given great proof of devotion . . . and that his Majesty never wrote a similar letter to old and better friends, such as Duroc or Lannes.”

Napoleon flew into a temper, and, writes Gourgaud, “told me that I was a child, that he had not asked my advice on what he ought to do, but only if I thought such a letter would have some effect on Hudson Lowe. He got up. Madame de Montholon, her elbows on the table . . . said that this letter was very good indeed, that I was wrong to take objection to one thing or another !

“I remarked to her ‘that when his Majesty does me the honour of talking to me I beg that Madame de Montholon will not interrupt. . . .’ She went on, notwithstanding, and I was forced to be silent so as not to bring about a scene little respectful to his Majesty.”

Napoleon then had the letter read out by Montholon. “As everybody approved,” continued Gourgaud, “I did not breathe a word more. . . . The Emperor having gone into his study for a moment, Montholon said to me, ‘So much the better that the letter should be like that, it’s a proof that his Majesty will write us similar ones.’

"The Emperor, still in a temper, walked about the drawing-room, then sat down, asked for a pen, and signed the letter . . . 'Your devoted'."

"In fact", Gourgaud ends sarcastically, "Las Cases owes me his thanks, for in cold blood his Majesty would never have signed himself that way."

Finally, at ten o'clock, Napoleon sat down with Montholon to chess. Then "in an agitated way" he said, "Come, Gourgaud, have a game; that will help compose you. Why do you always seem so angry?"

"Sire, I possess too serious a flaw; that of being too attached to your Majesty. . . . I thought it my duty to tell you that that letter was not worthy of you. How many nights has Monsieur de Las Cases passed by your side in your illnesses? There's not a soldier who hasn't spent a thousand more when campaigning, in danger! . . . I clearly see that in this world one must never tell the truth to monarchs, and that intriguers and flatterers are those who get on the best."

Here the Emperor interrupted with, "My wish is that one day Las Cases should be your best friend."

"Never, I detest him!"

"Ah, Gourgaud, that is not generous!"

But Gourgaud rushed on, warning Napoleon that the day would come when he would find Las Cases out.

"I defy anyone to take me by surprise," retorted the Emperor.

But even as he boasted he could not be deceived he actually was being deceived. Not only had Las Cases no intention of letting his diary be sent back to the Emperor, but he had no intention of returning himself. Lowe had told him, after he had been under arrest for about three weeks, that he might return to Longwood till instructions came from England as to whether he was to be sent to the Cape or not; but to this Las Cases had surprisingly replied that "his firm determination was not to return to Longwood"; and in his diary he writes that when Lowe made the offer, "I trembled to hear it".

The reason for this trembling is obscure. So is the impulsion that lay at the back of his whole behaviour at this juncture. Never have a man's expressed sentiments and his actions been more at

variance. The explanation why he who had beaten the Longwood drums of devotion and admiration the loudest should now be frantic to get away from Napoleon has never been forthcoming. His St. Helena colleagues accused Las Cases of having come out only with the object of writing down Napoleon's conversations, and he certainly must have known that his intimate diary of the daily round at Longwood would have an immense sale. In fact it is said that it ultimately brought him in £8000. But now, having been at the Emperor's elbow for over a year, he had collected enough of these conversational gleanings to fill four volumes; and he may well have thought that Europe would consider four volumes enough. His thirst to be admitted into closest intimacy with Napoleon — and this thirst does appear genuine — was now assuaged; further, he appears to have been convinced the Emperor was failing fast, and of what use to himself was it to be *garde-malade* to a Napoleon who would soon be too ill to talk? Las Cases had already had one or two experiences at Longwood of acting nurse to Napoleon, and he had perhaps found it even more onerous than standing for hours at a time in the steam from his bath. "They told me the Emperor was in a great state of suffering", Las Cases had written about a month before his arrest. "He sent for me to his bedroom. I found him, his head wrapped up in a handkerchief, quite close to a huge fire that he'd had lit."

"What gives the sharpest pain, the keenest pang?" demanded Napoleon.

Las Cases replied a little cruelly that it was invariably the pain one happened to be suffering from at the moment.

"*Eh bien*, then it's the toothache."

"At the moment", goes on Las Cases, "I was alone with him; I heated up alternately a flannel and a napkin, which he applied turn by turn to the painful place and said he felt much the better for it."

"Nevertheless, what a creature man is," exclaimed Napoleon, "the least fibre attacked is enough to upset him completely! . . . What a singular piece of mechanism! And I have still perhaps thirty years to be shut up inside this wretched casing!"

The next day it was the same scene. As Las Cases heated up

the flannel, Napoleon "showed himself touched, at times he left his arm on my shoulder, often saying, '*Mon cher*, you are doing me good.'"

Las Cases records this fact with satisfaction : it emphasizes the rôle he was playing, a rôle at any rate in part sincere, that of being supporter and sympathizer to this world figure toppled from its pedestal. But that rôle — brought to its end by what crises of incident or emotion we do not know — was played out. Las Cases' only wish now was to be gone. His ostensible excuse was the bad state of his son's health. Emanuel had lately taken to having fainting fits several times a day. But this, as two doctors had pointed out to Las Cases, was chiefly the result of the hours he sat writing for Napoleon or his father.

At Longwood, Las Cases' absence, far from making the atmosphere more harmonious, had worsened it. Napoleon was becoming increasingly disturbed at his absent Chamberlain's diary being in Lowe's possession ; for what might there not be recorded in it which he wished kept private ? A clear proof that during this first year Napoleon actually was working at some plan for escape is given by Gourgaud at this juncture, who mentions in his own diary that Las Cases in his would almost inevitably have made mention of "the conspiracy for *le retour* : three or four persons are named, compromised".

In this summer and autumn several entries in Las Cases' diary too have all the appearance of referring to this scheme for escape. One day in August he writes, "The Emperor sent for me to his room, he was already dressed : when he went out I accompanied him to the bottom of the wood, where we walked for some time ; he was discussing important subjects". Here follows a row of dots, necessary, so Las Cases explains, from "circumspection and prudence". A few weeks later, "About two o'clock the Emperor sent for me to his room, and gave me some private orders". This entry also is followed by a profusion of dots. At four o'clock the same day Las Cases found Napoleon in the garden under the tent surrounded by all the Longwood party, and the Emperor, in spite of complaining of being bored, seemed in the highest spirits, "sitting balancing on a chair, laughing, talking, striking his flanks in a gay manner". Was it because his plans for eluding Lowe's

vigilance promised success that Napoleon was so hilarious? Again, at the beginning of September, "The Emperor, after dressing, led one of us into the library, where he conversed a long time confidentially on serious subjects that vitally concern us". As confirmation that the above entries referred to some secret scheme, the English Governor had for some months past been receiving warnings both from Italy and France to be on his guard as it was definitely known in certain quarters that Napoleon was planning an escape.

And in the July of 1817 there is a particularly revealing paragraph in Gourgaud's diary.

Napoleon was in the drawing-room with him and the Montholons. "The Emperor then talked to us about the island; the coast, the means of getting away if we had a ship, a brig. His Majesty . . . asked for a map of the island, and made out his plans of escape. 'Through the town and in daylight, that would be best. On the coast . . . we could easily overcome a guard of ten men. *Yes, of twenty.*'"

At this point, says Gourgaud, they all began to laugh at the thought of the Governor's ignorance of their plans.

"Ah," went on Napoleon, "if he knew what we're talking about!" and then, continuing his arrangements, "I must not stay in my room. Only Marchand must know I'm not there; we will send Madame Bertrand to Plantation House, and O'Meara to the town." Borne along on the thoughts of this, in imagination, so easy escape, there followed more laughter and the telling of stories. At half-past ten the gay plotters went off to bed.

"I've still got fifteen years of life," exclaimed Napoleon as they parted.

In these various revelations Lowe's meticulous detective work, for which he has been so jeered at, had its justification.

As Lowe's prisoner, Las Cases was brought into close contact with him, and found himself quite unable to keep up the Longwood figment that the Governor was a monster. In fact he discovered him to be precisely the reverse. Dr. Baxter told Lowe

that Las Cases, in talking of him, had said that "your conduct towards him since his removal from Longwood had been marked with that politeness and attention which was in every way agreeable to his feelings, and that he saw at present your character in a very different light . . . than when at Longwood".

For Lowe had considered both his prisoner's feelings and his comforts, and when he had had Las Cases and his son moved to a small house, nearer Plantation House than Hutt's Gate, had their meals sent them from his own kitchen. Further, the Governor took this opportunity, now that Las Cases was removed from Napoleon's sensational atmosphere, to have some reasonable discussions with him over the Longwood problem, telling Las Cases, "how sensible he was of the disagreeable situation they were in, but they made it worse than it really was, and when he wished to make it better they opposed it". He asked Las Cases "to draw out some memoranda of the amendments he might be able to suggest, and he would consider them". There was no practical outcome to this endeavour on the part of Lowe, but he did have the satisfaction of pointing out to Las Cases his duplicity on a certain occasion when he had written to Lady Clavering complaining of the lack of furniture at Longwood while, at the very time he wrote, Lowe was "actually crowding furniture of all sorts into Longwood House". Lowe also told Bertrand about this time that "he had written to Government on the subject of an extension of the limits for his [Napoleon's] rides; and having understood some of the sentries posted round the grounds caused him some inconvenience, he would in consequence remove them to some other post."

It was from O'Meara that Napoleon received the disconcerting news that, though Las Cases had not returned to Longwood, Lowe had actually given him permission to do so until instructions came from the English Government as to his fate. Napoleon seemed, says O'Meara, "surprised and incredulous, and would not believe it for some time, made me repeat my words several times, got up off his sofa, walked about, asked me if I was sure that Las Cases had said so, if I had heard him myself, and, finally, appeared with great difficulty convinced of it". His stupefaction arose from the fact that only a few hours back he had seen a letter from

Las Cases to Bertrand in which he expressly stated that permission to return to Longwood had been refused him, and complaining of it as a "hardship".

Napoleon said "he would be very glad to see him back again", but then, after walking up and down and considering, he remarked, "I do not know how I can advise him to return when I have given just now directions to Bertrand to write a letter to the Governor demanding permission for all of them to go away, for when they are gone I shall be more independent . . . those people are all afraid of being sent off the island. I", he went on with a smile, "am not afraid of that."

He then sent for Bertrand, and told him "he need not go on with the letter for the present".

This extraordinary announcement of Napoleon's that he had deliberately contemplated pushing away from him the group of people who alone gave any human vitality and interest to his existence, and being left solitary on his rock, opens up too many paths of speculation for us to attempt to explore them. One thing is certain. He must have had at the back of his mind some plan of manipulating to his own advantage the arrangement he had been about to propose, probably that of facilitating his escape, or he would not have considered it.

In the meantime he hoped, by social philosophy applied with all the force of his temperament, to bring his group into better order. On Christmas Day — his second on the island — he prepared himself by a bath and dinner, and then, when the servants had left the room, those with him, it appears, being Bertrand, Montholon, and Gourgaud, he began. He started on a dulcet note enough, emphasizing all the good points in his followers' present condition. "Here", wrote Gourgaud afterwards, repeating Napoleon's speech, "we do very well, are very happy, we can go out riding accompanied by an officer. We have a good table. [This admission is interesting considering Napoleon's complaints about the food.] If we complain of it, it is because it's always necessary to complain. We are at liberty to go away when we like. We were formerly covered with renown, we should be well received everywhere." And then there follows a charming touch. They would, the Emperor assured them, "have subjects

for conversation for the rest of their life ". " You can ", Napoleon went on, " visit at Plantation House and at Bingham's, and the only unfortunate person is myself. First, to have fallen from such a height, then not to be able, as you are, to go out unescorted."

Gourgaud and Montholon had by now got on bad terms and rumours of a projected duel had come to the Emperor's ears. So now " Always duels in question ! " he exclaimed, and then becoming " very heated ", " It is all blustering, there is no consideration for me ".

Gourgaud tried to excuse himself in the matter of the duel " but his Majesty became more and more irritated ".

" Your only endeavour ought to be to try to please me," Napoleon wound up. " You possess the rough virtues, whereas Las Cases has the disposition of a woman. You were jealous of him."

Gourgaud struggled to get out some reply but the Emperor interrupted him with, " You thought in coming here you would be my fellow-comrade ; I am not a fellow-comrade to anyone. No one can gain the ascendancy over me. You would like to be the centre of everyone here — like the sun in the midst of the planets. It is I who must be the centre. You have been the cause of all my worries since we came here ; if I had known, I should only have brought out servants ; I can perfectly well live alone."

17

That evasive courtier, Las Cases, gave no definite reason for his decision to await his sentence, not at Longwood, but at the Cape, and merely enveloped the situation in cloudy utterances such as " I have pronounced sentence upon myself ; Fate has closed her shears . . . every instant I become feebler ; my hours glide away ; I cannot exist here ".

He asked Lowe if he might write a letter to Longwood " to make my adieux ". Having obtained permission, he immediately asked " when it was likely there would be a ship ready to sail for the Cape ", saying, " Monsieur le Gouverneur, I earnestly beg of you to remove me from this island as speedily as possible." When told on December the 27th that he would not be able to set sail

for two days, he exclaimed, "Would it not be possible to go sooner?"

Meanwhile Napoleon, through Bertrand, was now demanding that Las Cases should come to take leave of him. Lowe replied, "I have not the most distant objection to Count Las Cases proceeding instantly to Longwood for the purpose above mentioned, a British officer being present." Bertrand retorted with, "As to Las Cases taking leave of the Emperor in presence of a British officer, it was a thing to which he would not consent, even if it was for the sake of seeing his wife or child."

Las Cases, impenetrable to the last, gave Bertrand 4000 louis to be passed on to Napoleon ("this fulfilled my wishes and was to me a real happiness", wrote Las Cases). Bertrand, like everyone else completely bewildered at Las Cases' behaviour, made a final appeal: "But why go? . . . where is the difficulty in remaining and returning to Longwood?"

"There is great difficulty and great inconvenience," parried Las Cases. "I am resolute because I believe it ought to be so, and I believe I have done what I ought."

An unlooked-for postponement of Las Cases' departure, it being changed from the evening of the 29th of December to the next morning, threw him into a fret of apprehension: his fear apparently being that Napoleon would give him such a definite order to stay that he would not be able to refuse. This delay, avers Las Cases, "prolonged the tempest within me, and irritated my wounds . . . there are victories that cannot be gained except by flight: that which I was pursuing was of this nature".

When, the next morning, the warm-hearted Gourgaud, full of the spirit of reconciliation, appeared at Jamestown to say good-bye, Las Cases handed him another of his peculiar bulletins on the state of his emotions, saying that he "suffered a great deal from the combat taking place in his heart, and . . . that he needed rather to be supported than conquered".

Then Emanuel came into the room: "like his father he was in a very exalted state". Gourgaud asked Las Cases if his refusal to come back to Longwood had anything to do with himself. Las Cases, "astonished", gave him his word of honour that it had not.

"At last", writes Las Cases, "there arrived the moment of this eternal departure. . . . I threw myself eagerly into the ship's boat. . . . At last I set foot on the brig, the anchor was raised, and I believed the most practical of my wishes accomplished. Vain illusion that. . . ." But here he is off again . . . for ever juggling with his words and his feelings ; and we must decisively part, detach ourselves once and for all from this fantastic representative of the Faubourg St.-Germain, leaving him on board with his verbiage, his silky manners, his emotional conundrums, tipping up and down on the waves on his way to the Cape.

As for Napoleon, he was left confronted with one definite fact : a fact as crude as it was lacerating. His chosen companion, of whose devotion he had boasted, for whose sake he had lectured and scolded his colleagues, had deserted him.

On the evening of Las Cases' departure, Bertrand and Gourgaud (after "going in for a few minutes to The Briars where we had peaches with Betsy and Jenny") got back to Longwood at six o'clock. They found Napoleon at the billiard-table. He first had Bertrand in to talk with him, then Gourgaud. "He was in an agitated state," writes Gourgaud : "crammed me with questions, covered up the wrench to his feelings by saying, 'one must have control over oneself, and, if one wants to, one can become enamoured of a dog or a goat'," and finally tied a string round the situation by the cryptic observation, "Las Cases did well to go."

Certainly no man was more used to desertions than Napoleon. So used, in fact, that in a sense he was inured to them. And, however much disloyalty wrung his sensibilities, he could even, himself a careerist, sympathize mentally when others pursued their personal advantage to the detriment of his. Neither had he ever hoodwinked himself as to the cause of much of the apparent devotion of his followers. ("Eh," he cried one day to Gourgaud, "do you imagine that Drouot, who always wanted to be with the most exposed batteries, did it out of attachment for me ? He wanted to get himself talked about. . . .")

But the loss of these, his entertaining Chamberlain and his last Page, left a gap, an ache. There is no doubt that Las Cases had some subtle inner grace of personality such as both Josephine and

Talleyrand possessed : a certain quality that, correlating with Napoleon's innate violence, exerted over him a kind of enchantment. All three were to him ambassadors of some state of being that he apprehended but could not explain, had for him some indefinable connection with that world of reverie into which, when a young man, he so often found his way.

18

The New Year's Day of 1817 was marked by the now diminished group on the island with much present-giving. The evening before, Napoleon had sent a message to the others through Bertrand, saying that though " he feels he is in a tomb ", he would receive them all at four o'clock the next day in the drawing-room.

On this New Year's morning the Bertrand and the Montholon children came running into Gourgaud's room, and he handed round the presents he had bought for them in Jamestown. At ten o'clock Bertrand arrived, wishing him " a better year ". Then he received Montholon's good wishes. " Come," said Montholon, to his gloomy friend, " courage — no more sadness."

Gourgaud was obviously one of those who enjoy the giving and receiving of presents, and tells us that Montholon gave O'Meara an engraved stone : Gourgaud himself had had the fantasy to write inside the box of China tea he presented to Madame Bertrand, " May your years equal your virtues, and be more numerous than these leaves of tea ".

About half-past five Napoleon sent for Gourgaud. He found him with Bertrand and the children playing with the billiard-balls. " *Eh bien !* Gourgaud," exclaimed Napoleon as he came in at the door, " what have you to give me as my New Year gifts ? I hear you're distributing them to everyone ? "

" Sire, I can only give your Majesty again what I have always vowed to you — my existence ! "

Then followed a curious little scene — the Emperor trying to match Gourgaud's grandiloquence with an adequate present : Gourgaud stiffly ungracious. The Emperor first " asked for a bonbon-box that Pauline had formerly given him, and offered it to Hortense Bertrand ; he asserted that this box had cost fifty

louis. Then he sent for another box, asked me ", says Gourgaud, " what it might be worth, believing it to be a very large sum. I replied that his *bijou* was certainly pretty but that it was merely made of gold, and the stone on top only an agate. His Majesty assured me it was very beautiful ; asked for all his snuff-boxes, and showed them us, appraising them." Unable, apparently, to raise Gourgaud's enthusiasm for any of them, Napoleon had brought a pair of opera-glasses that, it seems, had been sent him by his sister, Caroline, and now, handing them to Gourgaud, he exclaimed, " I give them to you, they are good glasses."

" Then he sent for the trunk given by Monsieur Elphinstone and distributed to the ladies all that was in it, shawls, dresses, tea, etc. : to Bertrand a set of chess, to Montholon a cross in mosaic."

THE DUKE OF REICHSTADT

THERE is a contemporary painting entitled "The Reading of the Patent (1818) creating the Prince of Parma Duke of Reichstadt". The incident is depicted as taking place in a private room in, possibly, the Château de Persenberg, one of the imperial palaces, where the Emperor Francis, his wife, and Marie Louise and her son stayed in the summer of that year. The room is no show palace piece, but a moderate-sized morning or sitting-room with books on the tables, tippety little shelves of china against the walls, and settees and wall-paper diapered in small neat patterns. These settees and one or two occasional tables are the chief furniture of a room over which lies the conventional, well-bred, rather tedious atmosphere of high life in its private moments as led in the beginning of the nineteenth century. The summer sunshine streaming in through the lofty windows is fading a patch of carpet in front of each ; there is a serried line of small pictures placed too high, each pendent from one long cord fixed to the cornice ; in place of the shimmering elegance of the eighteenth-century chandelier there is, screwed close to the ceiling, a vast cauldron of some semi-opaque substance, ready, when the curtains are drawn, to shed its gaseous glare on the archducal family faces. Two wide-brimmed inverted top-hats placed on the settees give the impression of black flower-pots. At the further end of the room, too far off for recognition, a little group of men and women is clustered about a round table. The two men are much swathed with stocks, much built up on the shoulders ; the women are all balloon sleeves, balloon skirts, and coal-scuttle bonnets. In the foreground, fidgeting with the objects on one of the tables, stand two little boys in light trousers and dark jackets, one of them presumably the boy who, though only seven, has already borne successively the titles of King of Rome, Napoleon II, and Prince of Parma, and is at this moment in the process of being transformed into the Duke of Reichstadt.

Marie Louise's hopes of her son inheriting Parma after her had been, as we have seen, completely frustrated. When she had finally taken up her residence in Parma as reigning Duchess in the March of 1816, she had shown fight — no doubt primed and strengthened by Neipperg — over her son's inheritance, demanding of her father that her boy should enter "without the least delay" into the estates of the Bavarian Palatinate in Bohemia ; for, she wrote, "I have firmly decided not to accept from anyone any equivalent in the form of a pension. It is my duty as a mother, and my firm intention, to see the foundation of my son's future settlement not only fixed but, moreover, established during my life-time." ¹ The upshot of the whole dispute was that in the December of 1817 the Austrian Emperor had informed the Allied Powers of his intention of arranging that, on the death of Marie Louise, the estates of the Bavarian Palatinate should pass to his grandson as his private property. He had also announced that he was going to bestow on him a title that would invoke no memories of the past Napoleonic episode. At present these Bavarian estates belonged to the Grand Duke of Tuscany, and were so to continue during Marie Louise's lifetime. The title of Duke of Reichstadt had been taken from Reichstadt, the largest of the landed properties of the Bavarian Palatinate, which the Austrian Emperor now turned into a duchy. The boy was not to be styled Imperial Highness but merely Serene Highness : the Austrian Archdukes were to take precedence of him : he was not to be reckoned a prince of the imperial family but to be the first gentleman in Austria. All these prunings in the position of Napoleon's son had been, with the eyes of the Allies suspiciously fixed on Metternich and the Austrian Emperor, a most delicate matter. His position had to be adjusted to a nicety. Not too high, or the Bourbons, for whom this spawn of the Corsican was a perpetual concern, would be uneasy : not too low, or he might, as wrote the Austrian Chancery of State, "become an object of pity, and, consequently, of interest". That he should become an object of interest had at all costs to be avoided. The peace of Europe demanded that he must be a European outcast. England had announced that she would never permit him to ascend any throne.

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon, Bourgoing, III-12.*



THE READING OF THE PATENT (1818) CREATING THE PRINCE OF PARMA THE DUKE OF REICHSTADT

1818 - 1819 - 1820 - 1821 - 1822 - 1823 - 1824

THE ROOM IN WHICH THE DUKE OF REICHSTADT DIED IN THE CASTLE OF SCHONBRUNN





The right to exist could not be denied him, but that existence must be made, as far as politics were concerned, as imponderable and wraith-like as possible. In the patent creating him Duke of Reichstadt there were two peculiar omissions : no mention was made of his being the son of Napoleon : and his own first Christian name, also Napoleon, was omitted. He appeared in this document merely as Prince Francis Joseph Carl, son of Marie Louise, Archduchess of Austria and Duchess of Parma, Piacenza, and Guastalla. As for the little boy of seven, disarranging the odds and ends on the writing-table while the elder people read over his ducal patent, he was too young to realize the double insult to his father which that patent contained.

Far off, in his bedroom at St. Helena, Napoleon, lying on his sofa, faced by the several portraits of the boy who was still the dearest possession of his heart, would at times be consumed by a thought which he one day passed on in a saddened voice to Las Cases, "What if they instil into him a horror for his father ! The thought makes me tremble !"

But if he could have looked into the child's mind he would have been astounded to find how fresh, how living, and how treasured was the image there of himself. There was, too, always present in the consciousness of the *ci-devant* King of Rome, the realization of the height from which he had fallen, and, when he was older, his remark one day as he gazed at himself in a mirror, "This head which has already borne a crown is now robbed of all its glory",¹ was the simple expression of a regret which had never left him.

One hot day when sitting out of doors in the shade with Foresti and Collin the boy began to scrawl letters in the gravel with a little stick. "Monsieur de Collin, I'm going to write your name, how ought I to put it ?"

"Write, Mathew de Collin, tutor to the Prince of Parma."

"Oh !" he burst out, "what a dreadful title !" ²

Another day as he strolled with Foresti out of what was called the Tyrolean garden towards the park they came across several small boys. "Here comes the young Napoleon !" cried a voice from the group.

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 173.

² *Ibid.* 99.

"The Prince", writes Foresti, "heard it, and it plunged him into such a reverie and state of abstraction that I could not wrench a syllable from him in spite of my numerous questions."¹

That "in spite of my numerous questions" is symptomatic. His tutors, full of good intentions, but dunder-headed as regards psychology, took no account of all the subtle mental readjustments that were taking place behind those obstinate young eyes; readjustments necessitated by his being suddenly cut off from his past life and forced to embrace an entirely new one. Hitherto, in France, the pressures about him, the whole machinery of his life had been compatible with his temperament: he had been the centre of an harmonious synthesis. Now that machinery was exactly reversed: there was a ceaseless demand that his whole personality, sentiments, and outlook should become the opposite to what they were. He was the small trapped animal at war with his captors. It is obvious that during those first years at Schönbrunn the boy suffered, in a confused way, from a sense of loss of identity, and that in the disobedience, slyness, hostility, and, at times, childish malignity to which he treated Dietrichstein and his two colleagues, he was instinctively trying by self-assertion to re-discover himself. He had only to be told to do a thing, for him to at once make up his mind that that was the one thing he would not do. The tutors lacked flexibility and penetration, they did not take into account that the child's pungent experiences had already given him almost the reserve of a man. And yet, when one sees Sir Thomas Lawrence's full-face portrait of him, one wonders at their obtuseness. In this portrait the nursery child has turned into a small boy in a little ulster, curls cropped off. His glance has not the simple directness of most boys, it is already slightly veiled; the wide-apart eyes have that curious look induced by tears held back, the cherubic but tightly pressed-together lips have already learnt to keep their own counsel. It is the face of a child who has had experiences beyond his years.

With his exceptional quickness of mind he must each day have become more awake to the invidiousness of his position in his grandfather's palaces. The Emperor Francis derived pleasure from the odd little personality of his grandson, and would always

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 99.

have him sit next him at meals ; and, too, the affections of the other members of the imperial family were gradually warming to this child Adonis with his quips and his grace (" Nothing is more seductive than his face and his talk when he wants to be agreeable ",¹ wrote Dietrichstein in exasperation at the boy's two-sided nature), but the fact remained that he only half belonged to the Austrian royal family, and that the other half of him represented their country's greatest enemy ; that if he was an Austrian he was at the same time a Frenchman (and yet again, not actually a Frenchman but a Corsican) : that though Austria was his present home he in reality belonged to no country : that though he lived the life of a royal boy in all the moneyed comfort of Schönbrunn and the Hofburg, he was none the less a beggar living on the generosity of his father's gaoler, and a gaoler who was, so the child came to believe, keeping his father a prisoner in the most cruel conditions. As he gradually grew up his precocious questing mind must almost inevitably have become aware that, according to the Holy See, his mother's marriage to Napoleon was not valid, and that their son, in consequence, was from this point of view illegitimate. Nowhere, as regards himself, could he put his foot down firmly. This sense of lack of personal solidity is perhaps what always made him demand to be told precise facts : fairy tales, child stories — these he would have none of, asking what was the use of what was not true ? What did appeal to him was everything military : soldiering pleased him in that it was both matter-of-fact and exciting : it had too a close connection with that secret place in his mind where Napoleon dwelt.

He was consumed with longing to find out more about this father who, before, dominating his every moment, had, so far as he was concerned, in such an abrupt and extraordinary manner now completely vanished into the void. His confusion on the subject was only equalled by the confusion in the minds of his elders as to how to instil into him at the same time love for his reprobate father, with a horror for his lust of conquest ; and, equally, love for his Austrian grandparent, with approval that he should be acting gaoler to his father.

In the little prince's early days at Schönbrunn he was nervous

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 106.

of referring to Napoleon directly, but would, when he felt the courage, seize on any opening that offered. This is the kind of cat's-cradle conversation that would at times be heard in the Schrönbrunn schoolroom. Apropos of the French word *page*, the boy asked, "I had several in France when I was in Paris, why haven't I got any here?"

"Because here it isn't the custom."

Foresti had noticed the child's excitement as he posed his question, and now he followed it up with—

"Then who is Emperor of France now?"

"France has not got an Emperor, she is governed by a king."

"And who is this king?"

"Louis XVIII."

"Will his sons reign after his death?"

"He hasn't got a son, he's only got nephews."

"And who will reign after the death of all these nephews?"

"I don't know, no one but *le bon Dieu* can know that."

"All the same there was an Emperor in France, I am sure of it : who was this Emperor?"

"*Mon prince*, it was your dear papa, who lost his throne and his empire because of his unfortunate inclination for war."

He was six when this conversation took place. The next year, still kept in this torturing bewilderment as to what actually had happened to his father, he one day abruptly remarked to Collin,

"I should very much like to know really why they called me the King of Rome."

"It dates from the time when your father's authority extended as far as that. . . ."

"Then Rome belonged to my father?"

"Rome did not any the less belong to the Pope, as at present, for it is a sacred gift which no one can appropriate."

Then came the ever-burning question: "Where is he now?"

"The Pope is at Rome — that goes without saying."

"No, my father? I believe he's in the East Indies."

"Oh no!"

"*Ou bien*, in America?"

"Why should he be there?"

"Where is he really?"

"I can't tell you."

"I was told once . . . that he had been in England and that he had escaped."

"That is not true. You know very well, *mon prince*, how often you get things wrong."

The child, always afraid of making a fool of himself, managed a little laugh, "Yes, certainly I do!"

"I can assure you, on my honour," went on Collin, "that your father has never been in England."

The boy produced another protective laugh as he concluded, "I think I've heard, too, that he's living in poverty."

"What! living in poverty!"

"Yes."

"How could that be possible or even probable?"

"No, of course not!"¹ and, seeing he had inveigled out of Collin as much as he was going to get, he slid off onto something else.

To Dietrichstein's credit, aware to a certain extent of the trouble fretting his pupil's mind, he wrote to Marie Louise: "we have seen the struggle . . . and groaned over it . . . it is the source of the hurt that it is important to get back to".² But this getting back to the source, when done at all, was done in such a clumsy and harsh way that the boy's young spirit quivered, and withdrew still more within itself.

In this state of needlessly cruel perplexity in which his elders kept him, the child, endeavouring to get a few facts clear, would check the information he had managed to get out of one person against that given him by another; for we find him applying not only to Collin but to his grandfather as to why he had been called the King of Rome. The Emperor told him it was nothing but just a title, pointing out that he himself bore that of King of Jerusalem though Jerusalem was not part of his empire. Pondering over these collected scraps of information, the boy would pursue private trains of thought, only made apparent by a suddenly flung-off sentence that had no connection with anything that had been said. One day apropos of nothing he suddenly exclaimed, "He is my dear papa — he is a bad man — so will

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 95-7.

² *Ibid.* 93.

they kill him ? ”¹ and another day he all at once gave voice to “ Josephine was a princess of France. . . . I remember she was in Paris when I had already come into the world, but why ? ”²

“ And then,” recounts Foresti, “ not a word more.”

And beneath all these perplexities lay a ceaseless nostalgia for France, for Paris. “ Ah ! if I were in Paris ! ”³ was his reiterated cry when he first came to Austria. “ I shall go to another country,” he announced one day as he banged away on a drum ; “ I know very well where — but I won’t say ” ;⁴ and another time, praised by his tutors for his good German in speaking to one of his grandfather’s huntsmen, he protested, “ But I don’t want to be German, I’d rather be . . . I daren’t say what.” Collin pressed him to say. Visibly embarrassed, he added, “ I want to be a Frenchman,”⁵ and moved away. And yet this is the boy whom Dietrichstein complained of as lacking in “ sensibility about everything ”.⁶ But to those who read over the records of the Schönbrunn schoolroom the expression on the boy’s face that Lawrence trapped in his portrait is perfectly understandable. A craving grew in him to be alone, to get away, if only for a few moments, from this trio of German men who were for ever trying to contort him from what he was into what he did not want to be ; and, when he could, he would run away into an empty room merely for the relief of being alone, and at lessons would pile up a wall of books to shut out his tutors’ too watchful faces. This sense of being continually pried on was aggravated by his always being, for the fear that he might be kidnapped, accompanied out of doors by a great fellow of Falstaffian figure as detective. Perhaps it was the longing for some little place where he could creep away from all these pursuing eyes that made Reichstadt, as he must now be called, so enthusiastic over building a log-hut based on the one in *Robinson Crusoe*. He and Collin, for once in harmony, worked away at it together in the Schönbrunn park, close to one of those Swiss chalets which, a tribute to Rousseau and the simplicities, were at that time dotted about country properties both on the Continent and in England. The surrounding garden and park of Schönbrunn must by now have become part of

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 97.

⁴ *Ibid.*

² *Ibid.* 98.

⁵ *Ibid.* 98-9.

³ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 106.

the boy's own consciousness of being. Times without number he must have strolled with one or another of his tutors by the great fountain in the garden, where, amidst the continual splash and whisper of flung water, a stone Neptune and his naiads would be seen, if any passer-by were interested enough to notice, to be perpetually celebrating his Triumph. How often, with that sense of vacuity born from returning to the same scene too regularly, pedagogue and pupil must have heard the sound of their feet on the stone floor of the circular, colonnaded gallery in the grounds, called *la Gloriette* ; or, driving up the avenue on that side towards the palace, seen its stone volutes and columns forming in appearance a fantastic and lovely façade to the vast house behind.

One can imagine with what fascination the child must have clambered about the Schönbrunn fashionable group of elaborate imitation ruins which at that time served much the same purpose as does the surrealist picture of our day, giving, in a vision of confusion and disintegration, some subtle sense of relief from the strain of endeavour. Here and there on these broken pillars, overturned vases, headless bodies, scattered arms and legs, and cracked bas-reliefs, had been painted imitation weeds. But what would certainly have been the Mecca of any small boy was the private zoo. All the picture-book animals were there — elephants, lions, leopards, tigers, bears, hyaenas, kangaroos, dromedaries, buffaloes, and deer, moving about in enclosures which rayed out from a central point where Maria Theresa had built "a little, very elegant kiosk" in which the onlooker could sit and watch all that went on. Another place that must have drawn the child was the room Napoleon had used as his bedroom, where the Chinese lacquer on the walls, ancient as it was reputed to be, still showed its gay intricacies of gold and colour.

2

Even when the little prince was only five he had been brought in to attend the Austrian Court balls, a small timid figure, far too shy to dance ; but within a year or two he was finding these *Kammerbälle* an enchantment. Dietrichstein tells us of the boy's first successful evening : " Monsieur Pierre had done his hair. He

made his appearance in a white coat.”¹ In that age of sentiment this little sprig of the imperial house gliding about among all the vastness and beauty of those music-filled rooms was the very figure around which sensibility could entwine itself. That evening he was the focus for every eye. “People never tired of looking at him, questioning, caressing him, and following his every movement.”² Dietrichstein tried to get the strung-up boy to eat a little cake, but “the first sound of the violin made him push everything aside so as not to miss the valse”.³ At these moments, as, full of grace and aplomb in his white gala jacket, he pirouetted round the room, his sad preoccupation with the past faded; he experienced the first delicious tremors of social success; he saw himself mirrored in the eyes of the suave men and women around him as something that it was exciting to be. “People were quite mad about him”,⁴ wrote Dietrichstein proudly.

As for Reichstadt, one small incident alone cut into the glory of his success. Seeing the Archduke Antoine across the room, and eagerly running to speak to him, he slipped and fell. With all his terror of making himself ridiculous, he went crimson. Dietrichstein tried to reassure him, but the agitated boy only kept on repeating, “It is a disgrace! but, really, it is a disgrace!”⁵

If at Schönbrunn eyes were beginning to fix themselves with interest on the small Reichstadt, away in Parma Marie Louise’s mind was incessantly occupied with him. To leave him behind in Austria, when she had gone to settle in Parma in 1816, had torn her. “I think I should succumb with grief if I hadn’t the hope of seeing him again within a few months”,⁶ she had written to her father. But as for his education, health, and general well-being, she believed, apart from having him with herself, which, politically, was not allowed, that the arrangement could not be bettered. Coupled with her intention to do the best she could for her duchy of Parma (“my resolution to do all I possibly can to render the country happy”⁷) was her determination to save all the money she honourably could for her son; these sums being then sent to Vienna to make a nest-egg for him. She was obsessed with consideration for his future: “all my efforts, all my thoughts

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 107.

² *Ibid.* 108.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* 103.

⁷ *Ibid.* 105.

bear on this point".¹ When, in the summer of 1818, Reichstadt heard that she was coming on one of her visits to Austria, he suddenly asked Collin why Napoleon did not come too. Collin told him to ask the Emperor.

"That's what I'm going to do!" he cried, and insisted he should be taken to his grandfather that very instant. Collin managed to get into the room first, and warned the Emperor what he was going to be confronted with.

"*Eh bien*," the Emperor retorted, "he's only got to come in — I'll answer him."

The boy, very tense, hurried in, ran up to his grandfather and kissed his hand. "My mother is coming," he cried in his enthusiastic way. "Why doesn't my father come too?"

"Why doesn't your father come? . . . You shall learn why! It's because your father was wicked — he has been put in prison, and if you too are wicked, you will be put in prison too."²

The child was so shattered that, without uttering a word, he turned and went out of the room. That the Emperor, devoted as he was to his grandson, should be so lacking in humanity is only another painful example of the fundamentally poor quality of his affections. His third wife, whom he had married in 1816, young Caroline Augusta, Princess of Bavaria, fortunately had become most attached to the little Reichstadt, had nicknamed him *Fränzchen*, and liked to have him about her.

So far Reichstadt had no inkling of his mother's real relationship with Neipperg. Actually, the year before, there had arrived the first of the two children of whom Neipperg was the father, Albertine, born in the May of 1817. A son, William, came two years later. Bitter as it must have been to Louise that these children were illegitimate, it could only have added to the original bitterness when she realized that according to the Holy See the King of Rome was himself born out of wedlock. She married Neipperg in September 1821.

Reichstadt's passion for soldiering was no passing phase: as he grew, so it strengthened. When he was only six he demanded a soldier's uniform, the real thing, in miniature, and when, later, he was formally given the badge of a sergeant, he was beside

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 109.

² *Ibid.* 116-17.

himself with satisfaction. He would do sentry-duty outside the Emperor's rooms, and present arms to any man of the Court who happened to go by, but he would never present arms to any of the Court ladies. They twitted him about it. "I'm ready", he cried eagerly, "to present everything to the ladies . . . except arms."

3

Longwood garden in the early part of the year 1820. A strange-looking figure, short and be-paunched, wearing a long white dressing-gown, a huge-brimmed flat straw hat, and red morocco leather slippers, is busily occupied in directing a heterogeneous group of men, some of them Chinamen, who are digging up sods to make a high grass bank.

For Napoleon had suddenly tired of hiding himself away within the house, and had turned all his energies to gardening. Naturally he insisted that everyone he could lay hands on should share his own horticultural fervour. Bertrand and Montholon had had their secretarial pens snatched from their hands, and measuring-tapes and spades thrust into them instead. Lowe's workmen, who were constructing a new house for Napoleon near Longwood — for he had at last condescended just to glance at the plans and signify his agreement — were constantly being interrupted to supply articles he now demanded for his garden — railings, trellis-work, garden-tables, a wall broken down and a glass door inserted ; while the orderly officer, Captain Nicholls, would receive messages for more carts, more shovels, more spades.

One scheme of garden-construction after another now raced through Napoleon's mind. He would urge on his bondslaves — gardeners, Chinamen, valets, Grand Marshal, Chamberlain, and even their children — in building up one of these grass banks or in constructing a water system of pipes and reservoirs, only the next day to have the bank pulled down or the water system abandoned in favour of another. At times he would himself seize a spade or a watering-pot, or, grasping the pipe of the fire-engine, would souse the peach-trees he had had transplanted, but, as a rule, he looked on and superintended merely ; appearing "highly amused".

Captain Nicholls, whose duty it was to ascertain twice a day that Napoleon was actually somewhere about Longwood, was jubilant at all this gardening activity. "God send he may always continue in this humour . . . !" he wrote, for, up to October of the year before, the Emperor had had a spell of shutting himself up almost completely within the house, and the unfortunate Nicholls would often be from ten to twelve hours on his feet dodging about the grounds or surreptitiously fixing his gaze on one of the windows in his attempts to catch sight of his charge. Sometimes, in desperation, he would apply to Montholon to help him, but that wily Chamberlain would protest that whenever he did ask the Emperor to allow himself to be seen more easily he would fly into a passion, crying out, "Then they mean to assassinate me !"

In Nicholls' reports to Plantation House would appear communications such as, "At this moment there is a person sitting in the General's billiard-room with a cocked hat on. I, however, can only see the hat moving about. If the French are accustomed to sit at dinner with their hats on, probably this is Napoleon Bonaparte at his dinner."

Sir George Bingham describes one of these dinners. Gold knives and forks, entrancing Sèvres dessert service painted with views and portraits ; Napoleon too engrossed in his food to talk ; the others speaking barely above a whisper ; the room "hot as an oven" from the number of lit candles.

To return to Nicholls ; if in carrying out his duty he knocked at the doors, he found them locked ; if any of the French servants came upon him prowling and peering, they gave vent to those satirical and pungent observations at which the French tongue is so successful. To render himself still more annoying Napoleon had told his household not to accept from Nicholls' hand any letter from Lowe, and, one day, having a packet to deliver from the Governor, Nicholls tendered it successively to Montholon, Bertrand, and Napoleon's valet, Marchand, who all in turn refused it. In consequence Nicholls received orders regarding a certain important letter he was to deliver that, considering "the necessity of the letter being either presented to Napoleon Bonaparte or left in the room nearest to him that you may be enabled to reach, I

request you . . . will enter the house by the offices, and proceed towards his dressing-room, or such room as you have reason to suppose he is in, knocking at every door that may be closed before you open it ; and should you find them barred and bolted, or any personal obstacle opposed, merely put the letter down on a table ”.

It can therefore be imagined with what relief Nicholls saw this grotesque, white dressing-gowned figure each day displayed to view in the full rays of the tropical sun. Lowe too was delighted that his charge should be occupying himself in such an unexceptionable manner ; but, before long, his satisfaction turned to concern. Napoleon developed such a jealous affection for his garden that he took to shooting any animal that strayed into it. Novarra, one of his valets, possessed some chickens : Napoleon caught sight of several of them pecking among his grass, and immediately shot two. Some goats belonging to Madame Bertrand shared the same fate : so did a kid and two bullocks which one day strayed into his garden.

Sir Hudson Lowe was now faced with the problem as to what would happen if one day during this promiscuous shooting Napoleon picked off a gardener or one of the sentries. The questions whether, if such an event occurred, he could be tried for the offence, and, if found guilty, what would be the correct sentence, were actually submitted in England to the law officers of the Crown.

It is worth noting that in 1817 Lowe, anxious to provide Napoleon with some further shade, had suggested putting up a wooden construction about seventy feet long and twenty wide, “ painted, and decorated in a handsome manner as a kind of saloon or summer-house (like one of the Knightsbridge houses) ”. This suggestion was received by Napoleon with a shrug of the shoulders and the exclamation “ Disgusting irony ! ” As for recognition of Lowe’s kind intention, there was none. Alternatively, Lowe suggested that for the summer months he should rent for Napoleon “ a house the most agreeably situated perhaps on the island, and with the most trees about it, known . . . under the name of Miss Mason’s ”. Regarding this suggestion, writes Lowe, “ no acknowledgment has been made ”. When finally

Napoleon did accept the idea of a new house being built for him, Lowe, on his own initiative, had a high earthen wall made to screen the builders from the eyes of the Longwood inhabitants, as he knew how intensely Napoleon disliked the sight and noise of men at work.

4

It will be noticed that Gourgaud was not one of the gardening party ; for in the spring of 1818, in a culmination of disillusionment and bitterness, he had left Napoleon's service. Until he became exiled with the Emperor on his island he had been unaware of the subtler aspects of human behaviour ; of the little correspondence there is between reality and that interpretation of life as mirrored in song, in the Gothic novel, in martial music, and in the gentle imaginings of adolescence. Napoleon had said to him one day, " It's only with you I can discuss the sciences," and he would call on Gourgaud to help him solve mathematical problems : conversations, too, between him and the Emperor on military strategy were endless. But here Gourgaud's astuteness came to a stop. His transparent, unworldly nature had so far never taken into account the gyrations of self-interest ; had not reckoned, in human relationships, with the law of diminishing returns. At Longwood he learnt much. It was gradually borne in on him that he was one of those who inevitably raise the world's laugh of cruelty. Napoleon, bored at so much simplicity, would try the effect of a little instruction, pointing out that it is no use looking for affection in others, civility is the most one can hope for. " Men are all egoists, one must take them as they are ! but you . . . you want to be loved ! " and he went on to ask Gourgaud if he imagined he himself liked it when the Bertrands, instead of coming to keep him company at dinner, chose to stay in their own rooms. " If there were five of us at table, and during the evening, it would be far less boring. . . . " And another day, " *Eh bien*," he said to Gourgaud, " in this world one must be a charlatan. That's the only way in which one can succeed." And on one occasion Gourgaud, no doubt with a sense of shock, heard him commenting on the murder of the Duc d'Enghien. " What, that d'Enghien affair ? *Bah* ! . . . What is one man, after all ? "

Bertrand, still full of admiration for Napoleon's brilliance, but quite disillusioned as to his character, yet stuck to him with the grumbling faithfulness of an old nurse to a spoilt child. The Montholons, husband and wife, were all subservience, all admiration. But on Gourgaud's mind Napoleon had the effect of thunder and lightning. Constantly the pages of the young man's diary are wet with the tears which, child of his epoch, he was not ashamed to record.

For Napoleon to be faced with such an undefiled mind when what he demanded in his followers at the moment was duplicity and cunning was an exasperation, and, in consequence, in his evil moments he put Gourgaud on the rack. Fiendishly he would tear to shreds all those fine-spun relationships which are implicit in friendship: there was no emotional meanness, no implied insult he would not descend to. Take this for example. In one of Napoleon's secret intrigues in connection with the Commissioners¹ there was a question of a letter being surreptitiously passed from hand to hand. Gourgaud, one day being sent for by the Emperor, found him in the billiard-room. Napoleon spoke of his need for someone to do the job in question.

"O'Meara", he explained to Gourgaud, "can't undertake it, for it isn't suitable for an Englishman to have communications with foreigners, and, further, he is no intriguer, he is a man of honour. Archambault is clumsy . . ." and so on.

"Finally," says Gourgaud, "I saw clearly that the Emperor wanted me to do it . . . so I said, 'Sire, I hope that your Majesty is not going to charge me with this commission. . . . I don't care to be compromised for such a small thing: it would be most humiliating for me. Your Majesty has just told me yourself that O'Meara is a man of honour, and not an intriguer. Very well, neither do I know how to intrigue.'"

The Emperor flared up. Gourgaud remained silent.

"You do nothing but insult me!" Napoleon flung at him. "You are not attached to me! If you won't be of use

¹ Napoleon refused to receive the Commissioners in their official capacity; and Lowe refused to allow him to receive them as private persons. But through Montholon and Gourgaud Napoleon secretly communicated with them in the hope of persuading them to bring pressure on their Governments on his behalf.

to me, at least don't act against me."

Gourgaud tried to reply, but the Emperor burst out, "Ah ! leave me in peace, you bore me . . ." and in a rage he flung his snuff-box down on the billiard-table.

"I leave the room," writes Gourgaud, "fury in my heart, I want to go away. . . . I can't endure it any longer . . . his Majesty's behaviour to me would not be believed even by his most mortal enemies : it is atrocious."

At other times Napoleon would seem sorry for his kicked young friend : ashamed of his own ill-treatment. Then it would be intimate playing about with his name, whimsical gentleness : "*Mon cher Gourgaud*", "*mon petit Gourgaud*", "What is the matter that you look so sad ? *De la gaieté, gorgo, gorgotto . . . mon fils gorgo*", or it might be "*Monsieur Gourgaud*", "*Illustrious Gourgaud*". And always there would be these demands that he should be "cheerful" : even, one day when the young man was in such a state of depression that he could scarcely eat, Napoleon adjured him to be not only gay but "*gai et comique*". There were occasions almost too lacerating to live through. That terrible day when, something having been said about Gourgaud's having once saved the Emperor's life on the battlefield, Napoleon casually remarked, "I don't remember it".

This incident, which Gourgaud looked on as the crowning point of his career, he had had engraved pictorially on his sword, and now, at these words, he writes, "My arms fell to my side ! 'What ! your Majesty does not remember ! . . . All Paris was talking about it.'

" 'They ought to have talked to me about it.'

" 'Sir, I was convinced that your Majesty saw it. . . .'

" 'I know', Napoleon concluded, 'that you are a brave young man, but it is astonishing that with your intelligence you can be such a child.'

Gourgaud, having thrown over everything to go with Napoleon into exile, was anxious as to his mother's financial position. He applied to the Emperor, who, as Gourgaud well knew, could help him with the greatest ease. Napoleon made promises . . . became evasive . . . gradually shifted the situation about to such an extent that, having exasperated and humiliated

Gourgaud to the last degree, it was, finally, the Emperor who was forcing the money on the now indignant Gourgaud. Even then Napoleon tormented him by the method he took to transmit it. "The Emperor's conduct towards my mother is infamous : after having forced me to accept help for her, he procures it through a stranger so as to compromise her. What prevented the Emperor from writing to his London banker, as is done every day, instead of slyly applying to Prince Eugène ?"

Finally, exasperated at the scenes Gourgaud made with Montholon, scenes in which, nevertheless, Bertrand seemed to consider Gourgaud was justified, Napoleon exclaimed, "Let there be an end to it all ! Do you think, when I wake in the night, that I don't have bad moments when I remember what I was, and where I am now ?"

This had been in the January of 1817. In February of the following year Gourgaud went to Plantation House and asked Lowe for permission to leave the island.

"I can't live here any longer without dishonour," he protested. "I've been treated like a dog."

O'Meara told Lowe that Gourgaud was now in a very low state of health, emaciated, and generally wretched ; that he lived almost entirely in solitude, and seldom saw Napoleon, who only now and then asked him to dinner on Sundays, and not nearly so often as he did the Bertrands and Montholons.

Before leaving the island, Gourgaud wrote to Montholon referring, and it seems with cause, to the Chamberlain's "intrigues" against him, and challenging him to a duel. Montholon wrote back saying that for the last eighteen months they had "mutually provoked each other", and that it was impossible for him to fight Gourgaud as he had promised Napoleon that, while with him, he would accept no challenge.

Before he sailed Gourgaud had several talks with the Austrian commissioner, Baron Stürmer ; and when he arrived in England, an interview with Lord Bathurst. In these various talks was revealed a whole subterranean life of intense activity that, in spite of Lowe and the restrictions, Napoleon and his attendants had been carrying on with the outside world : Gourgaud admitted that, from the first, letters had passed with the greatest ease in and

out of Longwood on their way to or from England and the Continent ; also money, pamphlets, and any article the French group required. This secret service was generally undertaken by Englishmen, either those visiting the island, or captains of merchant ships whose boats touched there. These commissions for Napoleon were undertaken sometimes for nothing, sometimes for pay. Gourgaud admitted too that Napoleon could lay his hand on large sums of money at any time merely by drawing a draft on Eugène or certain other members of his family. As for the Emperor escaping, Gourgaud said that he had already had ten opportunities of doing it, and could at that very moment.

"If he can," asked Stürmer, "why doesn't he?"

"We have all urged him to. He has always opposed our arguments. . . . However unhappy he is here, he secretly enjoys the importance attached to guarding him, the interest shown by all the European Powers, the trouble taken to collect his least words, etc. He has often said to us, 'I couldn't live now as a private person ; I prefer to be a prisoner here than at liberty in the United States.'"

Napoleon had, too, got the impression that if he went to America he would in all probability be murdered. "I see in America nothing but assassination or oblivion. I prefer St. Helena."

A few months after Gourgaud took his departure, O'Meara too left the island. Unscrupulousness coupled with impertinence had gradually incensed Lowe against him, and relations between them became so strained that in April this year O'Meara had sent in his resignation. In May, Bathurst, owing to certain revelations by Gourgaud, wrote to Lowe instructing him to remove O'Meara from his post of medical attendant on Napoleon. O'Meara, receiving official instructions that he was to leave Longwood "without holding any further communication whatever with its inmates", at once went off for a two-hours' chat with Napoleon. In consequence he was ordered by Lowe to leave the island. In August, therefore, this familiar Longwood figure set sail for England. Within that contumacious mind there already lay germinating those seeds which, later, were to develop with such virulence into the vilification of Lowe.

In passing, it is worthy of note that one of Lowe's activities this year was to take a foremost part in abolishing slavery in St. Helena.

A further departure, in July of the following year, was that of Madame de Montholon. For some time both the Montholons and Bertrands had been becoming restless, and were envisaging the idea of escaping from Longwood life, and letting their place be taken by others. The quixotic spirit that had bound them all together when they first landed amid the guns and rocks of St. Helena had worn thin. Napoleon's temper, no doubt in part due to his unsuspected cancer in the stomach, was becoming more and more uncertain; his peevishness on some days must have been hard to bear. But he had no intention now that either his Grand Marshal or his Chamberlain should leave him, and though several times he made an appearance of giving his consent that Montholon should accompany his wife, when it actually came to the point he cried out, "What! you would go off like that and leave me alone with Bertrand! *non!*" And when Bertrand told him how his own wife was aching to leave the island, Napoleon merely retorted, "Give her another child!"

In balance to these various departures from Longwood, in September 1819 there arrived a new surgeon for Napoleon, Professor Antommarchi; also two chaplains.

In the autumn of 1820, Napoleon, one day noticing that the workmen employed on the new house being built for him were absent, decided to go and have a look at it. When he saw the airy rooms, the large windows with their shutters, the surrounding verandah, the beautiful stuffs used for the curtains and upholstering, he was quite struck, and said it would be to act like a child if he refused to go there when it was finished. In the end, however, chiefly from inertia, he never left Longwood.

5

The same year in which Napoleon poured his final energy into his garden he paid a surprise visit to Sir William Doveton, who lived in the island at a house called Mount Pleasant.

The month was October, but the weather was summer. Sir

William Doveton was taking his usual before-breakfast walk in the limpid air when he saw a group of riders coming towards his house. Levelling his spy-glass on them, he saw that the central figure was Napoleon, and that he appeared to be about to pay him a visit. Montholon, now riding on ahead, came to the door of Mount Pleasant, and said that the *Emperor* sent his compliments and would be glad if he might come and rest himself. Doveton offered all hospitality.

Montholon rode back to the others, and in a few moments the group, riding up, dismounted from their horses, and strolled onto the lawn. Doveton knew no French, and Bertrand not much English, but in spite of these defective means of communication Doveton managed to convey a few observations of a complimentary nature to Napoleon, and asked him to come inside and sit down. A married daughter of Doveton and some grandchildren were staying with him, and they were lurking about the house to see what they could. Napoleon, sitting down on the sofa ("as fat and as round as a China pig", as his host remarked later), spied one of these grandchildren, called her up to him, took out a little tortoiseshell box, extracted a small piece of liquorice, and squeezing her nose with two fingers, put the liquorice in her mouth. Doveton now asked Napoleon to breakfast with him, but this was declined, Bertrand explaining that they had brought their breakfast with them, and that Napoleon would prefer to have it on the lawn. To dissuade the Emperor, Doveton showed him the dining-room, pointing to a large pat of butter on the breakfast-table as being for his guest's use. Napoleon signified his appreciation by taking hold of his host's right ear. He then returned to the drawing-room and the sofa. Doveton's daughter, Mrs. Greentree, now came in with a child in her arms and two little girls. Napoleon rose, and pointed to the sofa for her to sit by him, while the little girls in turn received nose-nippings and liquorice. Montholon had meanwhile been busy on the lawn, and the whole company then issued from the house.

For a hot morning the meal, a mingling of Napoleon's and his host's provisions, was certainly ample: cold pie, cold turkey, curried fowl, potted meat, dates, almonds, oranges, salad, and what was either a ham or a joint of pork; all through the meal

Doveton could not decide which. Napoleon had also brought champagne and coffee. After breakfast a return was made to the house and the sofa. Conversation, through the means of Bertrand, was proceeding when, no doubt to Doveton's stupefaction, Bertrand told him the Emperor wished to know if he ever got drunk.

"I like a glass of wine sometimes," replied Doveton.

Then Mrs. Greentree was put under examination. "How often does your husband get drunk? Once a week?"

"No."

But Napoleon, as ever, was determined to collect statistics. "Is he once a fortnight?"

"No."

"Once a month?"

"No, it is some years since I saw him in that state."

"Bah!"

After some further talk, armed down the steps by Bertrand, the Emperor departed.

6

April 1821. Night had fallen over Longwood: darkness that was not so much darkness as a thin curtain of dimness drawn over the glare of day. Here and there near the house glimmered the red coat of an English sentry; isolated, silent figures in the quiet of the warm southern air. Above, the stars in their spectacular brilliance: around, that sense of hushed expectancy of a tropical night.

Within Napoleon's bedroom, in a far more impenetrable darkness — for he insisted on having the shutters tightly shut — Montholon was groping about for a fresh night-shirt and a fresh handkerchief for the perspiring figure on the bed. This was the seventh time during the night that he had had to fumble about carrying out these acts of devotion; Napoleon's valet, Saint-Denis, being in the room next door ready if help were needed. "Seven times", writes Montholon, "I changed the Emperor's clothes, and each time flannel and linen were soaked, even the Madras handkerchief round his head. These changes of linen are very difficult to do without making him impatient, for he won't

have any light in his room ; the only thing he will endure is a candle in the next room, and it is by the feeble gleam of this light that I have, not only to give him, but to put on, everything he needs, even to tying the Madras handkerchief round his head."

During these days of April it had become evident that the Emperor's health was giving way altogether, and every night now he exacted from Montholon all his strength and patience in attending to him. Up to a few weeks before, ill though Napoleon was, he would, if for an hour or two he felt slightly better, repeat little Italian songs, laugh, joke, toss all around him his own Napoleonic gaiety ; but, now, that was over. All the same, weakening daily though he was, and scarcely able to eat anything, the machinery of his mind still functioned with the same energetic precision, and now that he realized that his own life was closing, his thoughts turned more than ever to his son. His weight of ambition he now slipped from his own back onto the slender shoulders of the boy in the Schönbrunn schoolroom. He would dictate advice to this distant figure, or arrange the clauses of his will for two hours on end. Montholon alternated between nurse and secretary.

Lowe, anxious Napoleon should have another doctor in addition to Antommarchi, sent a suggestion that Dr. Baxter, a man with a great reputation on the island, should visit him. Napoleon instantly credited Lowe with wishing in this way to procure "false bulletins", and, he added, "is he already thinking of the autopsy?" He did, however, finally consent to see Dr. Arnott, another well-known St. Helena doctor. But, when he came, it was not so much a matter of doctor and patient seeing each other as of tactile awareness of each other's presence.

"I was", says Dr. Arnott, "walked into a dark room where General Bonaparte was in bed. . . . I could not see him, but I felt him, or someone else."

This was on the night of the 1st of April, within a month of Napoleon's death from cancer in the stomach ; but, so far, neither Antommarchi nor Arnott had succeeded in diagnosing his complaint. "Can you at least tell me what my illness is?" Napoleon had asked Antommarchi, who persisted in treating him for the liver disease, *hepatitis*, to which inhabitants of St. Helena were

liable. Napoleon's father had died of cancer, and Napoleon had always feared it would be hereditary ; but the theory that it was the climate of the island that was killing him fitted in most satisfactorily with his anti-British policy, and when Madame Bertrand, the mother of the little girl, Hortense, of whom Napoleon was so fond, came to see him, and asked him how he was, " We must prepare ourselves ", he announced, " for the fatal sentence ; you, Hortense, and I are destined to undergo it on this villainous rock. I shall go first, then it will be you ; Hortense will follow ; we shall all three meet again in the Elysian Fields."

Each day now his state of physical wretchedness grew worse. Lady Holland had from time to time sent him " some preserves which he called '*pruneaux de Madame Holland*' ", and these he asked for. Antommarchi thought he might find some lemonade soothing. Napoleon took a drink of it.

" Doctor, what is it ? . . . What a horrible preparation ! "

" Lemonade, Sir."

" Lemonade ! " He was silent for a moment, and his head sank to his chest ; and then Antommarchi caught the words, " Glutted with insults ! exposed to every privation ! Into what hands have I fallen ! "

Three weeks had gone by without his being able to shave, and his beard had grown to such a length that at last he was brought to agree that someone must cut it off. Antommarchi suggested that his servant Coursot, or one of his suite, should undertake it. Napoleon considered for several moments, and then, remarking that so far he had always done it himself, added, " Never has anyone placed his hand on my face ; now that I have no strength, I am forced to resign myself, to submit to a thing which my instinct has always refused. But no, Doctor," he concluded, turning to Antommarchi, " it shall never be said that I let myself be touched in this way : I will permit no one but you to take off my beard."

The young doctor had never shaved anyone but himself, and fell back on his inexperience.

" It shall be as you please," said this peculiar travesty of Napoleon from the pillows, " but most certainly no one but you shall boast of having lifted his hands to my face."

One night at the end of April the enduringly patient Mon-

tholon was watching as usual by the Emperor's bed. Napoleon was having a fairly calm night, and at four o'clock he suddenly said to his companion "with remarkable emotion", "I have just seen my kind Josephine, but she would not kiss me; the moment I wanted to take her in my arms, she got up. She was sitting there. . . . She has not altered: always the same, always all devotion to me. She told me we were going to meet again, never to part. She assured me that . . ." Here he broke off and asked, "Did you see her?" In the morning he spoke of her again.

In his daily increasing misery his thoughts turned to the fear that when his son came to die he might have to undergo similar suffering. Now, convinced his disease was cancer, he implored Antommarchi ("I beg you, I charge you") to make an exhaustive examination after his death, and to take notes for the future guidance of his son. "I want at least to save him from having this disease," and, another day, "You will spare him the agonies with which I am torn."

On the 21st of April he sent for the Abbé Vignali, and entered into every detail of the religious rites to be observed on his behalf before and after death. After he had left the room Napoleon rallied Antommarchi on what he chose to consider his incredulity. "Can you not believe in God? . . . after all, everything proclaims His existence."

Each day two diaries at Longwood, those of Montholon and Antommarchi, were opened at a blank page, and each day the tired fingers of the two young men filled them with all the distressing details, the fevers, the vomitings, the deliriums of the dying man. There he lay: prostrate and impotent. All his past power no more now than if it had been some worn-out possession flung into a corner of the room.

Two nights before the end came, a storm roared and bellowed around Longwood: it thundered against the walls like charging cavalry; trees were heard crashing to the ground; the willow under which Napoleon used to sit was torn up by the roots: a macabre touch was added by a horse which, having got loose, rushed frenziedly around the house. It was as if he who had caused such an upheaval in this world could not pass to the next

without an accompanying obbligation of stress and violence.

For the night of May the 4th Montholon's entry in his diary runs : " A very bad night : about two o'clock in the morning he was evidently delirious, which was accompanied with nervous fidgeting. At one moment I thought I distinguished the disjointed words, '*France, armée, tête d'armée, Joséphine.*' At the same moment the Emperor threw himself out of his bed by a convulsive movement against which I struggled in vain : his strength was such that he threw me over backwards, dragging me along with him over the carpet. He held me so tightly that I couldn't call out for help. Happily Archambault, who keeps watch in the next room, heard the noise, and ran to help me get the Emperor back into his bed."

In the morning it was evident that his end was near, and at the early hour of half-past five Madame Bertrand, in accordance with the ideas of the day, brought her children, Hortense, the little Napoleon, and his two small brothers, into the drawing-room, into which the Emperor's bed had been moved, to say good-bye. When the children had last seen Napoleon he had been the brisk, laughing, incalculable, adored friend : now, in his place they were confronted with that prone, immovable figure, that emaciated, distorted face which sloped away so peculiarly into the down-flowing beard. Even Dr. Arnott, when he first saw him, had said his appearance was " horrible ". At first the children, their eyes filling with tears, gazed at the dying man in stupefaction : then, " with a common impulse they rushed up to his bed, seized the Emperor's hands, kissing them as they sobbed ".

But the strangeness and alarming aspect of the whole scene was too much for their tender minds. One of the little boys suddenly fainted, fell onto the floor and had to be carried into the garden to recover : and for fear of what might happen to the others they too were hurried out into the air.

Lowe arrived early during the morning and was given a note scribbled in pencil by Dr. Arnott : " He is dying. Montholon prays I will not leave the bedside. He wishes I should see him breathe his last."

Standing by the Emperor's bed was the sleep-exhausted Montholon, every few moments lifting a sponge moistened with

eau sucrée to Napoleon's lips. As the hours went on, "He remained immovable, his right hand outside the bed, his eye fixed, seeming as if absorbed in some profound meditation, without any appearance of suffering, the lips slightly contracted". His face as a whole "expressed thoughts of a gentle nature".

Meanwhile, Sir Hudson Lowe, waiting in one of the Longwood rooms, was receiving the intermittent bulletins: "The pulse cannot be felt at the wrist now, and the heat is departing from the surface. But he may hold out some hours yet." "He is worse. The respiration is become more hurried and difficult." And then, written just ten minutes before six o'clock in the evening, "He has this moment expired".

7

From the engraving of the ravine where Napoleon was buried at St. Helena arises an atmosphere of intense quietude. The grave lay in a little enclosed garden, oval in shape. Within this tranquil place two willows drooped their branches, and close by a small fountain filled the silence with its watery crepitation.

Here, if ever, lay a man over whom archangels might weep: a man who had had it in him to become an inspiration for the human race, and who chose instead to be a signpost for dictators. "Perhaps no man", suggests Mr. Forsyth, "ever for the sake of his own restless ambition inflicted so much positive misery upon his species." This certificate, bestowed for being the greatest donor of misery to the world, has now passed to other hands, to Hitler, a man far more evil than his Corsican forerunner. It is of revealing interest to note in how many points Mussolini and Hitler, and especially Hitler, followed their precursor. It was Napoleon who realized that applied psychology is one of the strongest military weapons; who organized secret propaganda on a large scale; who sent back false military reports ("You are a simpleton; you do not understand business", Napoleon flung out at Bourrienne in Egypt when he remonstrated); who, in his continuously raised armies, finally conscripted mere boys; who introduced a system of espionage in France that betrayed persons and families to the Minister of Police; who tried to stop intel-

lectual progress that ran counter to his own ideas by employing Geoffroy and Fontanes to write down the Encyclopaedists and praise the authors of the time of Louis XIV ; who put forward, shrouded within a fabric of chicanery and lies, the pretence that it was his desire for the betterment of nations which forced him to wage war on them.

In his system of education for the whole country, incorporated in *l'Université de France* which Napoleon founded, he said that " My chief aim in establishing a teaching body is to have a *means of directing political and moral opinions* " : in fact every boy in the country was to have his mind shaped according to Napoleon's own martial outlook ; the cut of the pupil's uniform was military ; the hours of lessons were marked by the roll of a drum ; the discipline was Spartan. Here was certainly an adumbration of the Nazi upbringing of youth. And as for the closeness in spirit of Hitler's catechisms for schools and Napoleon's *Catéchisme Impérial* for the children of France, the similarity is startling.

" Q.—What are, in particular, our duties towards our Emperor Napoleon ?

A.—We owe him love, respect, obedience, fidelity, military service. . . .

Q.—Why are we bound to show these duties to the Emperor ?

A.—Because God has established him as our Sovereign, and has rendered him His image here on earth. . . . To honour and to serve our Emperor, is, therefore, to honour and to serve God Himself.

Q.—Are there not particular reasons which should strongly attach us to Napoleon I, our Emperor ?

A.—Yes, for it is he whom God has raised up to restore the holy religion of our fathers. . . . Those who fail in their duties towards our Emperor, will render themselves deserving of eternal damnation."

But there was more fineness, far greater possibility of spiritual development in Napoleon than in Hitler. One might say of Napoleon that, originally, humanism and egoism were the systole and diastole of his being ; his desire for the betterment of mankind was genuine, but his desire for self-exaltation, for world-dominance, finally overrode everything. It could be said in

extenuation that his genius, his stupendous capacities, put a strain on his character that may be described as scarcely fair. But that is an insidious and dangerous theory. To whom much is given, of him much is demanded. Whatever excuses can be put forward for him, it cannot be denied that he gave an evil jerk to the political consciousness of Europe, an impetus which, gathering speed through the years, resulted in the carnage into which she fell in 1939. At the time when he rose to power there was a heaving in the European yeast, a readiness to be manipulated. If Napoleon's aims had been higher, his outlook less egoistic, what, with all the compulsion of his extraordinary powers, might he not have accomplished? When he speaks theoretically, how clear his vision is: "There are moral laws as inflexible and imperious as the physical." "One should not take the impulse of the moment as final: one should act on the sum total of all one's impulses." "A great reputation makes a reverberating sound . . . laws, institutions, monuments, nations, all disappear, but the sound remains, and re-echoes to later generations." "Like a watch, I exist without knowing what I am." "My son must not think of avenging my death [for nearly up to the last he chose to consider it was the English Government that had killed him]. . . . All his efforts must tend to reign by peace. If he should want, out of sheer imitation and without absolute necessity, to start my wars over again he would be nothing but an ape. . . . One never does the same thing twice in a century." And he finishes this long instructional thesis to his son, which he dictated to Montholon, "But everything you tell him, all he will learn, will be of little use if he has not in the depths of his heart that sacred fire, that love of the good, which alone brings about great things".

But of the fatal hiatus between his theory and his practice he was unaware. In his own eyes he was both saint and martyr. In fact, at St. Helena, it was by the light of morality that he persistently justified his past actions. Whether the gradual deterioration of his character was in part due to reaction from the brutal rebuffs in his youth, rebuffs registered by a peculiarly alert masculine vanity, is an interesting question. Most certainly they played their part: but given his character and his knowledge of

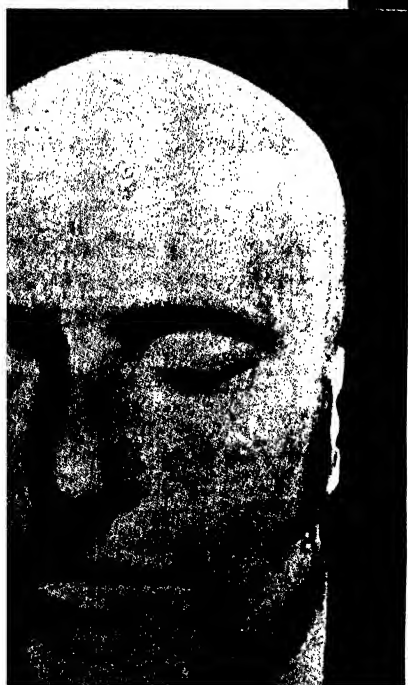
his own powers, once the idea of world-dominance rose before him as a possibility, from that moment he was doomed. Not that he ever actually parted company with morality, but as he proceeded on his way his vision of morality's stern brow became continually more oblique ; his self-deception more subtle.

Beneath his Protean capacities as soldier, politician, administrator, and legislator is to be detected one fundamental quality — a vivacious freshness of outlook on any subject that presented itself to his mind : and this quality never dimmed with the years. He had a perspicacious stare into the very centre of any matter. His originality drilled through every convention. One thing he never was and never could be : a gentleman. But in a man of such multiple brilliance, whose radius of being was so extended, such a consideration may be said to be beside the mark. Leaving his negative let us turn to his positive side. "He enlarged indefinitely the limits of human conception and human possibility", writes Lord Rosebery ; and again, "Till he lived, no one could realize that there could be so stupendous a combination of military and civil genius, such comprehension of view united to such grasp of detail, such prodigious vitality of body and mind".

As regards his adopted country he may be said to have been the midwife of modern France. Under his aegis, his stupendous gift to posterity, *le Code Civil*, came into being. He founded the *Noblesse d'Empire*, *la Légion d'Honneur*, and *l'Université de France*.

He built docks at Antwerp and Flushing, and the gigantic one at Cherbourg ; hydraulic works at Dunkirk, Havre and Nice ; roads from Antwerp to Amsterdam ; from Mayence to Metz ; from Bordeaux to Bayonne ; from Parma to Spezia ; from the Pyrenees to the Alps ; and those over the Simplon, Mont-Cenis, Mont-Genèvre and Corniche passes. Bridges at Jena, Austerlitz, Sèvres, Tours, Rovanne, Lyons, Turin, Isère, la Durance, Bordeaux, Rouen, etc. ; the canals that join the Rhine to the Rhône, the Scheldt to the Somme, and la Rance to la Vilaine ; also those of Arles, Pavie, the Rhine, and the canal de l'Ourcq (and the distribution of its waters throughout Paris). In Paris he erected numberless public buildings — the Louvre ; quays for the Seine ; the streets named Napoléon (de la Paix), Castiglione and de

*"Life is a slight dream that
vanishes."—Napoleon*



Rivoli ; the Cour de Comptes, the Conseil d'État, the Temple de la Bourse and l'Arc de Triomphe de l'Étoile ; churches, charitable institutions, granaries, market-places, colonnades, obelisks, and fountains. He re-established the Lyons factories, and started others for various materials. In these thousands of workmen found employment.

8

From Napoleon one instinctively turns to his St. Helena antagonist. If Napoleon was Lowe's prisoner in the flesh, Lowe was, and has remained, his victim in the spirit. The invective with which Napoleon ceaselessly bespattered him had its origin, as we have seen, partly in deliberate policy, the hope, by making himself appear ill-treated, of getting a reaction in England in his favour ; and also partly, one strongly suspects, in the fact that he could never rid his mind of that final Sunday talk when, heated and gesticulating, he had pitted all his Italian venom against Lowe's imperturbability. Afterwards, as already stated, Napoleon openly blamed himself for the poor figure he had cut, for his own lack of self-control and dignity as compared with that of his gaoler, and declared he would never see him again because of this very disparity of temperament.

During the five years that Lowe had Napoleon under his charge he never ceased paying him every kindness in his power, and Napoleon never ceased repaying evil for good, maligning the Governor with every calumny his ingenious spirit could devise. And there can be no greater testimony in Lowe's favour than that Napoleon, after these five years' wilful misconstruction and persistent vilification, was at last even himself overcome by Lowe's essential goodness of heart, and the long-suffering Governor had the satisfaction before his prisoner's death of hearing Montholon say that the Emperor had for some time past noticed so much " kindness and such gracious intentions " on the part of Lowe that he now viewed matters very differently from before.

The facts being what they were, one may well ask why Sir Hudson Lowe has come to be looked on by his country as a sinister figure. The answer is that never has a public servant been

so cruelly and persistently misrepresented. Gradually the false St. Helena legend has been built up : the original and most energetic builder being, of course, Napoleon himself. " Whatever anyone may say," Napoleon boasted, " here I can form the Governor's reputation according as I wish. All that I say against him, about my ill-treatment, about his ideas of poisoning me, will be believed." In contradistinction Lowe said of Napoleon, " At one time I had hoped that I might help him to support his great reverse of fortune, but I soon discovered that his first and strongest wish was to aggravate and heighten the grievances of his situation, and that the greatest unkindness I could be guilty of was to leave him no cause for complaint ".

To realize Napoleon's intolerable attitude to Lowe — his ingratitude, sneers, and rudeness, his refusal to answer messages, the insulting observations which he made Bertrand write in reply to the Governor's courteous letters, his wilful misinterpretations of Lowe's continual kindnesses : to grasp this in its entirety one has to have recourse to Forsyth's three volumes in which this sordid chapter of Napoleon's career is set forth with indisputable proof. Napoleon's summary of his complaints in his letter addressed to the English Government has already been given here, and its bogus nature exposed. But the English nation, not knowing the true facts, took his letter at its face value, and the St. Helena legend began to take shape. This was followed, in 1816, by a book, *Letters from St. Helena*, written by Warden, who had been a surgeon on the *Northumberland*, and had attended Gourgaud, when ill, at Longwood. Gourgaud described this production as " a regular tissue of lies " ; Madame Bertrand spoke of " the ridicule and contemptuous indignation " with which it was treated at Longwood ; while Napoleon admitted that, though the foundation was true, it contained " a hundred absurdities and a hundred lies ". The English public, however, seized on it as further proof of the ill-treatment Napoleon was undergoing. This was followed in 1817 by a pamphlet purporting to be by a Longwood servant, Santini — who incidentally was one of those who were " expelled " from Longwood — entitled *An Appeal to the British Nation on the Treatment of the Emperor Napoleon at St. Helena*. This pamphlet is now known to have been written by

a Colonel Maceroni (who had served under Murat) from information given him by Santini. The brochure from this prejudiced source ran into seven editions within a fortnight : and English minds were again stunned with horror at the goings-on at Longwood.

But the man who most harmed Lowe's reputation was O'Meara in his *Napoleon in Exile, or a Voice from St. Helena*, published in 1822. This time the English nation was staggered ; as indeed it well might have been if O'Meara's fabrications had been true. Lowe, by then in England, at once determined to refute O'Meara's slanders, and applied to the Solicitor-General, Sir John Copley, and the Chief Justice of the Court of Common Pleas, Mr. Tindal. They advised him to choose the most libellous passages in O'Meara's book for his affidavit in applying for a criminal information. But an almost incredible ill-fortune dogged this attempt at self-vindication. O'Meara's book had been published in the July of 1822. It was only at the latter end of Hilary Term in 1823 that Lowe's counsel moved for the criminal information. The application was refused by the Court on the ground that it was made too late. The vindication of Lowe's character which, if O'Meara's book had been dissected in court, would have been overwhelming, disappeared in vapour.

In 1823, Las Cases' book appeared. Las Cases, as we have seen, gave any event the implications Napoleon wished. The whole bias of his book was to exalt Napoleon and condemn the British Government. But here, in the publication of these romantically prejudiced volumes, was fresh fuel for the mind of Britain. As if this added injury to Lowe were not sufficient, in 1828, when he was Commander of the Forces in Ceylon — after having been offered, but having refused, the Governorship of Antigua — Sir Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon* was published. Though Scott had access to the despatches of Lord Bathurst and Lowe, actually to sift the situation to the bottom he needed many documents and letters to which he had not access. His attitude to Lowe even suggests that he only made a cursory examination of the papers that were at his disposal. It was not till nine years after Sir Hudson Lowe's death that Mr. Forsyth, in possession of all documents and letters bearing on the St. Helena episode, not

only vindicated Lowe from every imputation, but proved by ascertained fact that he had been an exceptionally considerate and magnanimous man who did all in his power to alleviate his prisoner's position.

But the ill-destiny that had dogged Lowe with such peculiar insistence had not done with him yet. In the early part of the twentieth century Lord Rosebery's *Napoleon, The Last Phase* stirred up in a later generation fresh antipathy to Napoleon's gaoler. *The Last Phase* is indeed an insidious book : the cultured charm, the seemingly moderate tone, the darling wit, would seduce and bias anyone not forearmed against the political prejudices, the evasiveness, and prevarications that in reality mar every page. The monument to truth that Mr. Forsyth had patiently piled up is, in its solid three-volumed sobriety, a book for the student : the casual reader scampers through O'Meara's *Voice from St. Helena* or loiters a little longer over the gracious urbanities of *The Last Phase*, and imagines he has learned the truth. What he has learned is, in one case, the most vindictive, and, in the other, the most tendentious travesty of the truth. Lord Rosebery says of Forsyth's *History of the Captivity of Napoleon at St. Helena* that it is " futile because it is unreadable ", and as one peruses the chapter in *The Last Phase* on Sir Hudson Lowe, so completely does the author ignore the evidence in Forsyth's conclusive vindication, that one is tempted to ask whether Lord Rosebery was himself one of those who found it unreadable. Of Lowe's goodness to his prisoner, of his forbearing behaviour and unweariness in well-doing — of all this Lord Rosebery says not one word. Of Napoleon's own intolerable attitude, his insults, slanders, misrepresentations, and ingratitude, of this there is not one word either. Lord Rosebery's system of proving his thesis is to collect all the disagreeable personal observations made about Lowe — without enquiring the reasons for the animosity displayed — and there to let the matter rest.

The witnesses whom Lord Rosebery cites must be examined. He first brings forward Forsyth himself, quoting him as saying that Lowe's " manner was not prepossessing ". There is no doubt that the Governor of St. Helena had at times a dryness and brusqueness of manner which his enemies used as a handle against him :

and yet we have not only Napoleon himself remarking, after his first interview with Lowe, "This governor is a man of few words, but he appears to be a civil man," but both Las Cases and Gourgaud mention on various occasions how markedly agreeable he was when they had personal dealings with him. When Napoleon found that he could not, as he had intended, get the upper hand of his gaoler, he burst out, "His eye is that of a hyena caught in a trap." (Lord Rosebery erroneously quotes this as Napoleon's comment on their first, and not, as it actually was, on a later meeting.)

Lord Rosebery's next witness is Sir Walter Scott. His lack of access to the complete body of documents, and the little use he appears to have made of those he had access to, has already been mentioned. There follows the Duke of Wellington. Lord Rosebery quotes him as saying that Lowe was "a very bad choice . . . a stupid man, he knew nothing at all of the world, and, like all men who know nothing of the world, he was suspicious and jealous". Lowe's letters to the Government are, except for their laborious diction, certainly more those of an astute than a stupid man. Whether he was over-suspicious of Napoleon and his *entourage* will always remain open to question : but what is not open to question is that Lord Bathurst was for ever urging him to be more suspicious, that is, to use still more caution, and that, out of consideration for Napoleon, Lowe almost invariably lessened and softened the instructions he received from the English Government. Supposing Napoleon had played up to what was expected of him, and had made a definite attempt to escape, which attempt Lowe's precautions foiled, what encomiums would have been bestowed on the Governor's perspicacity ! If, in following up minute clues, he has laid himself open to the charge of being unnecessarily pernickety, he was only forestalling the modern detective's effective methods. Those who prepare for an event that does not materialize always appear slightly ridiculous to the ordinary mind. Of the jealousy with which the Duke of Wellington credits him, I have come across no proof. And in contradiction to the Duke's strictures we have, equally, his approbation when, during a debate in the House of Lords, he exclaimed, "There is not in the army a more respectable officer than Sir

Hudson Lowe": and, later, he wrote to Lowe saying that he had for him "the highest respect and regard". Conventional phrases admittedly but, in the circumstances, carrying weight.

Further witnesses summoned by Lord Rosebery against Lowe are the foreign commissioners who each year became more disgruntled as they kicked their heels on the island to no purpose. Forsyth refers to "the tedious and troublesome disputes in which they involved themselves with the Governor", and says "they had literally nothing to do but gossip and cabal, and had given Sir Hudson Lowe much trouble by their repeated attempts at unauthorized communication with the French families at Longwood". It is hardly to these troublesome and disputatious foreigners, one of whom had to be removed from the island, that one would look for a reliable or unbiased opinion of the Governor.

It is worth noting that Colonel Jackson, who was at St. Helena in command of the 20th, and who had formerly worked under Lowe when he was Quartermaster-General at Brussels, says that he showed all his subordinate officers "the utmost consideration". Also Mr. Henry, a military surgeon at St. Helena, who at times stayed at Lowe's house, says that "the demeanour of this much-injured man was always gentlemanly and courteous both to himself and all around him". When, in 1817, Lord Amherst had an interview with Napoleon, he told Lowe afterwards that Napoleon had made some bitter complaints, and asked Lowe if he ought, when he returned to England, to make them known to the Prince Regent and the Ministers. Lowe said he wished him to repeat everything; on which Lord Amherst remarked, "In such case, Sir, I shall think it my duty as an honest man to say, at the same time, I consider them unfounded." (Incidentally, this British peer, during his interview with Napoleon, must have been a little startled when, during the course of their conversation, the Emperor exclaimed, "You have placed on my head, as had Jesus Christ, a crown of thorns.")

Lord Rosebery's most cherished witness against Lowe is Sir Pulteney Malcolm, the Admiral of the station. Actually, when Malcolm first arrived at St. Helena he praised the Governor warmly, and told Lowe he had assured Napoleon "from all I heard and knew, that you possessed a kind heart". He also

told Napoleon that Lowe was "anxious to do all in his power for him". The ultimate coldness that came about between Lowe and Malcolm during their time together on the island only grew gradually. The causes are too involved to be entered into here, but even according to Lady Malcolm's naturally biased account her husband seems to have been too ready to take offence, and also to have been lacking in the finer shades of loyalty to a colleague. One gets the impression that Napoleon had managed slyly to work on his feelings ("I know how to put on a little soft manner when I want to *embobiner* someone!" Napoleon one day confided to Gourgaud). On Lowe's side there seems to have been nothing reprehensible in his behaviour to Malcolm except an occasional brusqueness. Finally, a correspondence ensued between the two men, serious enough for Lowe, in his usual open manner, to send it to Lord Bathurst. However, Bathurst wrote back that Malcolm had spoken so highly of him ("in his audience with the Prince Regent he expressed himself in terms of great commendation of your conduct") that he did not consider it even necessary to open the packet of letters.

Sir Robert Farquhar, when Governor of the Mauritius, stayed for a few days at St. Helena, in 1817, and wrote afterwards, "of the indulgence, kindness, and consideration" with which Lowe treated Napoleon. Sir Henry Keating, too, who also visited St. Helena while Lowe was Governor, wrote of Lowe's desire that everything to do with guarding Napoleon should be done "in the most delicate manner, and with a proper regard to the feelings of the fallen man".

When one considers Lowe's position at St. Helena, governor of a small island on which was a nest of some fifty hostile French men and women, every one of them on the *qui vive* to make mischief, to misconstrue and distort his every action, to involve and trip him up over every word, one realizes the impossibility of any man in his position being able to escape a certain amount of odium. Actually, he was in general so much loved at St. Helena, that, when he left, the islanders sent him a letter of gratitude for his governorship, and regret at his departure: and when, later, he revisited the island, he received an ovation. The best praise of Lowe is implicit in his own words as, after viewing Napoleon's

body as it lay dressed in uniform on his bed at Longwood, he walked about the grounds of Plantation House with Major Gorrequer and Mr. Henry talking of the inevitable subject.

"Well, gentlemen," said Lowe, "he was England's greatest enemy and mine too: but I forgive him everything. On the death of a great man like him, we should only feel deep concern and regret."

Among those whom time has raised onto pedestals Hudson Lowe deserves a place as the great exponent of English magnanimity.

9

One day in the early part of July 1821, a courier of the firm of Rothschild was to be seen bumping on his hard-pressed galloping horse along the sunbaked roads that led to Vienna. Incredible as it seems, considering Napoleon had died two months before, this rider, though rumours were rife, appears to have been the first accredited bearer of the news to Austria.

When Napoleon's death became known at Schönbrunn, Captain Foresti was entrusted with the wretched task of breaking it to his pupil. Some instinct made him wait till "the quiet hour of evening" of the summer's day before he said what he had to say, and even then he was surprised when he saw the face of this reserved, enigmatic boy, whose insensibility Dietrichstein complained of, suddenly convulsed with tears. Collin, too, spoke to him next day of Napoleon's death, and again there was this uncontrollable sobbing. In these tears the secret preoccupation of his days was made evident. Instead of his life in Austria dimming the image of his father in his mind, a mind singularly tenacious, that image had become, if anything, more vivid, the symbolic figure round which clustered his memories, his affections, his pride, and his ambition. So far, though widely separated, he had at least known that his father was living in the same world as himself: now even this sense of distant support was suddenly withdrawn.

This love for Napoleon turned now more than ever to his father's militarism, fastening onto that as the essential note of his parent's life. Reichstadt was now ten, and very soon his eager

eyes were running down page after page of books on military tactics and military history. Mingled with the boy's memory of that idolized figure of the past was the thought of his own future career, his ever-growing secret hope that he might one day be called on to reign in France as Napoleon II. The whole question, its possibility or its impossibility, was for him steeped in confusion — in doubts, intricacies, ignorances. These ignorances he would try to dispel by sidling conversational approaches, or abrupt, seemingly careless, questions. Up to the time of Napoleon's death he appears to have been given only half-knowledge about the Bonaparte position ; and from such scraps of information as he could get hold of, from what he was told, and equally from what he was not told but had guessed, or had heard hinted at, he had to build up the situation and weigh his chances as well as he could. Each year as he grew older, his mind revolving ever more persistently round this question, the subject became, as we are soon to have proof, more and more of the nature of an obsession. It is evident that this hidden and absorbing preoccupation accounts for that continuous reserve, that disconcerting slyness, that unchildlike obliquity of conversation which were Dietrichstein's despair. That he could expect a boy who already had not only passed through such unusual experiences but was the offspring of such an unparalleled man, now to turn into a normal little schoolboy is the measure of his unsuitability for the post of mentor.

Ironically enough, considering how tutor and pupil outwardly pulled different ways, they were yet inwardly both secretly hugging the same ambition. Beneath Dietrichstein's depressed air he was nursing the treasured thought that he was educating and training not merely a member of the Austrian imperial house but the future Napoleon II of France. It was Dietrichstein's misfortune that he could not so much as hint to this elusive boy what future he had in mind for him, or explain to him why it was necessary so to whittle and mould him to a certain shape. No slightest reference to the reason must ever escape him. The boy must not be unsettled, must not be given extravagant hopes that, more probably than not, would never be realized : in accordance with the accepted Austrian policy he must outwardly be brought

up merely as the future ruler of the estates of the Bavarian Palatinate. In consequence, each secretly working for the same end, but both unaware of the fact, man and boy remained outwardly hostile, each a ceaseless exasperation to the other.

It is interesting to watch this painstaking, naturally gloomy-natured and slightly pathetic man, each year identifying himself still more closely with the child he was training ; the barometer of his own sense of success rising or falling according as the boy succeeded or failed.

10

Every year when the spring came round at Schönbrunn the Austrian Emperor gave a fête which was both a party and an imperial flower-show. This took place within the sumptuous conservatories filled with the rare plants, the palms, the ferns, the flowering shrubs which that indefatigable botanist, the Emperor, had collected from all over the world.

When Reichstadt was twelve, we see him, a most self-possessed seductive-mannered boy, brought to one of these parties. We watch him moving about within this world of foliage, all about him an outburst of spray and tendril, bud and flower ; and here and there behind the massed-up verdure, a dazzlement of glass walls. The young Empress and her ladies round her in their party dresses give the appearance themselves of so many human flowers ; and uniformed men, their chests aglitter with medals and orders, bend and bow with all the suave mannerism of the Austrian *beau monde* — the whole scene as if afloat in spring sunshine.

The moment came when, according to custom, the ladies seated themselves at all the little tables for refreshment placed in the centre of this bowery place, while the men stood back, forming a large circle round them. At this moment the Empress caught sight of the little boy of the palace she was so fond of, her Fränzchen, and calling him up to her, made room for him by her side. The ladies round her, too, were full of fluttering welcome. But this for some reason did not please. Reichstadt's eyes — eyes of that intense blue that always seem to hold something of the sky in them — were troubled, his face embarrassed and a little

red, and then, quite gravely, he bestowed his reproof : " My place must be with the men." For that was the note he was now insistently striking. He was on the strain to imitate his nine-years-old friend, and uncle, the Archduke Francis.

By the time Reichstadt was fifteen his health was far from satisfactory. He had grown into a tall weedy boy, pale and coughing. It was about now that he read, with what sense of horror one can imagine, all the St. Helena chronicles. None of them was kept from him : O'Meara, Las Cases, Gourgaud, Antommarchi — he read them all. It must have been a most peculiar experience for him after this seemingly endless separation from his father, with no word or sound issuing from him, to meet him once more in this extraordinarily intimate way in those vital if prejudiced memoirs, to discover his views on a hundred subjects, to hear him in his moments of persiflage, and, most poignant of all, not only to realize how all these years he had remained closely in Napoleon's heart, but actually to receive a long personal message from him in Napoleon's final advice and admonition. Naturally the boy believed everything that his father's intimates said ; and accepted without suspicion the morally exalted portrait of himself that Napoleon had impressed on the writers' minds. He, Napoleon's son, at once became convinced that everything his father had done was praiseworthy ; that those who said otherwise lied. If, before, Napoleon had been to him hero and idol, he now, in addition, became saint.

Reichstadt's passing years, as one reads of his boyhood, hot now with his enthusiasm of living, with his excitement at developing from child to man, these years strike like the hours of a clock. Fifteen is left behind : he is sixteen ; he is seventeen. And at seventeen we find him consumed with two desires — a captaincy : and emancipation.

As regards the captaincy he wrote to his tutor, Foresti :

" Very dear Comrade, — I hasten to impart to you the most pleasant event of my life, in a word an event as unexpected as it is delightful, an event that paves the way for many things, an event that has suddenly made me the happiest of men !

" Yesterday before dinner, the Emperor had my mother called into his study : after a short talk she came out with an air

of gaiety, talked a long time with the General [Neipperg] and the Count [Dietrichstein] and, during the meal, with the Emperor, all the time looking smilingly at me.

"After the meal, the Emperor played his game as usual, and it wasn't till the moment came when he was going that he called me up to him.

" 'You have been wanting something for a very long time,' he said.

" 'I, Sire ?' I replied, quite embarrassed and thinking it must be some joke of my mother's.

" 'Yes,' he went on, 'and as a proof of my satisfaction and of the services that I expect from you, I appoint you Captain in my regiment of Chasseurs ! Become a brave man ; that is all I wish.' And upon that his Majesty left me.

"Drunk with joy, and hardly in a condition to stammer a reply, I went off. In the big drawing-room, the Empress was waiting for me, as well as the Archduchesses and all the gentlemen ; everyone congratulated me. From there I went to find my mother, to whom, in short, I owe my nomination. For several days she'd been preparing the Emperor for it, and, finally, yesterday, made her request : not very ready to grant it, he told her to ask the advice of Count Dietrichstein, who, agreeing to it, and uniting his request to my mother's, brought about the decision." ¹

Dietrichstein had consented whole-heartedly to the captaincy, but he set his face against emancipation : his pupil must, so the head tutor considered, receive much more of that instruction which Dietrichstein could force into him only "with unbelievable labour".² "The Prince is obstinate beyond what one can have any idea of," ³ he groaned.

Beneath the boy's alluring manner, his easy conversation, his way of occasionally throwing off such astute observations that he gave the impression of capabilities which Dietrichstein knew he did not really possess : beneath this delectable exterior one or two unpleasant characteristics were beginning to appear. His entire thoughts, for instance, were centred on self-exaltation ; and if it placed himself in a better light he did not hesitate to expose other people's weaknesses in a rather malicious manner. About this

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 164.

² *Ibid.* 165.

³ *Ibid.* 161.

time Dietrichstein's sense of good taste began to be irritated by his pupil's leanings towards the bizarre in his clothes — those waistcoats, those walking-sticks, notably some with handles to represent animals' heads, made this arbiter of good taste shudder.

The Bonaparte conspiracies during these adolescent years of Reichstadt were endless. Joseph Bonaparte was working away in the background for his nephew whom he wished to see enthroned as Napoleon II. In 1820 there had been a plot in Paris to overthrow the Bourbons ; a plot with strong indications that, if it succeeded, Napoleon's son was to be proclaimed successor to Louis XVIII. Three years later, one day when Reichstadt was out driving, an envelope, containing a tri-colour rosette and a letter urging the boy to come to France, was thrown into the carriage. Then, at the end of 1828 the poet Barthélemy, an extremely vocal anti-Bourbon, came to Austria, and, later, published a poem, *Le Fils de l'Homme*, for which he was imprisoned.

Reichstadt ached now for war to flare up anywhere in Europe that he might take part in it, and so escape from schoolroom to manhood. Meanwhile lacking a war, he filled in his spare time with vague fiddlings with other interests. For one moment it seemed, so much did he gaze at and examine his grandfather's cherished flowers, that he might become a botanist. He took to drawing ; and one day made a copy of one of Napoleon's horses in a painting by Vernet : then hung it over his writing-table. Then he took to paying visits to a laboratory : Professor Czermak dissected a thirteen-months-old child in front of him ; and opened up a salamander to demonstrate the circulation of the blood. But neither in flowers, drawing, nor dissected babies could he find fulfilment. Ambition whispered at one ear, and war at the other.

Besides books on military science his rooms were filled with the weapons he was now continually buying and hanging up. There they hung, giving him at least a sense of extension of his manhood ; symbols of what he most desired ; but at the moment merely collecting dust for the imperial housemaids to remove. But over books and weapons brooded the spirit of Napoleon : the legend of his father was a power-house which held everything to which his youth stretched out. In the thought of that stupendous parent lay interest, excitement, ambition, a call, a

challenge. The blood of Napoleon, welling within him, turned back to its bestower.

II

In the February of 1829 Neipperg died. Marie Louise was overcome with despair. Of the three men who had manipulated her life, he alone had not betrayed her trust. "I feel", she had written to her father when Neipperg was dying, "as though my own life were gradually ebbing out with his."

Meanwhile, Dietrichstein, struggling with his evasive pupil, exclaimed in one of his Parma letters, "He is, and will continue to be, incorrigible, and he is preparing a very stormy future for himself." "I foresee nothing", he went on in miserable exaggeration, "but immorality, laziness, and folly."¹ However, having penned the last sentence, feeling perhaps that he really had rather overstressed the situation, he had tried to cross it out.

Before long, Reichstadt was ill again: the coughing and the irritation in his throat had returned. These facts he tried, but failed, to hide from those about him. The idea of taking precautions filled him with indignation. When his doctor, Standenheim, began chattering about such absurdities as medicine, whey, a concoction of herbs, he made a regular scene. He, Napoleon's son, fiddle-faddle with herbs and the corks of medicine bottles . . . ! It was, he was convinced, all a hoax on the part of Dietrichstein and Standenheim to prevent him, by this pretext of bad health, from getting his emancipation: and he told Dietrichstein so.

It was in the June of 1830 that Reichstadt met the man who was to become his supreme friend. This was Comte de Prokesch-Osten, now thirty-four. He was soldier, writer, and diplomat. In his portrait, something instantly sympathetic lurks about those bushy eyebrows, those dark meditative eyes, that all-but-smiling mouth: the limp-hanging hair in itself seems an assurance that here in this young man, in spite of his having so steadily climbed the ladder of achievement, there is nothing overbearing or arrogant. There is power, but power that expresses

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 182.

itself nonchalantly, with unhurried charm. His slightly bending-forward pose gives his waistcoat a good-natured crease. He is essentially the type that rather glides than walks through doorways, that interrogates with the lift of an eyebrow, and answers a question with a whimsical smile. When he and Reichstadt first met, he had already accomplished a considerable amount. He had fought in the wars of 1813, had been attaché to the Emperor's brother, Archduke John ; and had then, being a brilliant mathematician, become professor at the Military Academy of cadets at Olmütz : after that he became aide-de-camp to Prince Schwarzenberg, who was in command of the Austrian Army. After Schwarzenberg's death, Prokesch published his *Mémoires du Maréchal Prince de Schwarzenberg*, which in Germany was considered a classic. Prokesch then joined the staff of Admiral Count Dodolo who was in command of the Austrian fleet sent to put a stop to Greek piracy. In connection with these activities Prokesch had entrusted to him several missions in Asia Minor, Greece, and Egypt that specially demanded acumen and tact. In this summer of 1830 he was in Graz at a moment when the royal family, including Reichstadt, were there on a visit. In view of his past record he was considered important enough to be, as he puts it, "invited to the imperial table". At dinner he found himself facing Marie Louise and, seated next him, the Duke of Reichstadt.

We see Prokesch sitting there with his sensitive face and quiet manner, and at his side — probably in the close-fitting white Austrian uniform with its high black collar — the outwardly assured but inwardly troubled product of Dietrichstein and Marie Louise's care, this Apollo boy with his air at once tutored and mutinous, with the intensely blue eyes, the immature nose a little sunburnt on top as in Daffinger's portrait of him. The fact that he was Napoleon's son ; that, caged though he was in Austria, he might at any moment step forth as a European figure of spectacular importance, must already have been vividly in Prokesch's mind ; but as he looked at this young man with, as he writes, "his masculine forehead, his fair and abundant hair, silence on his lips, with an air of calmness and self-mastery", "he made an impression on me", continues Prokesch, "that was

really extraordinary. I had a presentiment such as lays hold of the adolescent when he happens for the first time to meet the young girl to whom he will lose his heart.”¹

During and after dinner Marie Louise and the Archduke John plied Prokesch with questions about his travels. Prokesch had been promised the embassy to Greece as soon as an occupant had been found for the throne ; and now, as he talked away, an idea took form in his mind regarding the problematical boy who had sat next him at dinner, and, as Prokesch himself puts it, he “ glided into the course of the conversations the idea that the throne of Greece, lacking candidates since the refusal of the Prince de Cobourg, could not be given to anyone more worthy than the son of Napoleon ”. He had expected his suggestion would meet with opposition but it received “ general approbation ”.

Later, Reichstadt complained to Prokesch of his sense of isolation. “ Remain with me, sacrifice your future to me,” the Duke urged his new friend with the ingenuous egoism of the very young. “ Remain with me ! We are made to understand each other ! ”

A certain section of modern society has acclaimed Prokesch and Reichstadt, in their relation to each other, as belonging essentially to itself. In a sense undoubtedly, but in a sense only. It is clear that, whatever their mental and spiritual fusion, those alone were the planes on which they met. Prokesch's open and bland confession of surprise at the effect Reichstadt's personality had upon him is proof of his unawareness of what interpretation might be put upon their friendship. It must too be taken into account that he had already been engaged to be married, and that though the engagement had been broken off, he was, within a few months, to become engaged again, this time to Irene de Kiese-wetter, whom he married in 1832. As for Reichstadt, his father had always been, and was to remain, his fetish, his hero of imagination : Prokesch provided him with one in the flesh. But he was valuable still more as the friend and companion, perfect in all understanding and sympathy, and, what was to Reichstadt at the moment a necessity beyond everything else, he was full of interest

¹ *Les Témoins de l'Épopée Comte de Prokesch-Osten. Mes Relations avec le duc de Reichstadt, publiées avec des commentaires, des notes et des documents inédits par Jean de Bourgoing.*

in and enthusiasm for the career of the Duke of Reichstadt. Before Prokesch, the young man could give rein to all his adolescence ; he could display his self-distrust, his ambitions or his tears without fear of rebuff. With this new friend he could fling down all those barriers which, even as a child, he had instinctively begun to build around himself : no need here for those careful deceptions and reserves, those hesitancies, those oblique conversational approaches. In front of Prokesch he could dare to try on his young manhood, and ascertain, in the mirror of those dark and gentle eyes, whether it fitted satisfactorily.

One day, when Reichstadt, Prokesch, and Dietrichstein had all been talking together, Dietrichstein went off, leaving the other two. Immediately "the young prince", writes Prokesch, "seized me by both hands. 'Tell me frankly,' he exclaimed, 'is there some worth in me ? . . . What do you think of my future ? . . . the son of the great Emperor ? Will Europe stand his occupying some independent position ? How can I reconcile my duties to France with my duties to Austria ?'" and he rushed on in a torrent, saying how, if France called him, he would leap to answer the call, "and if Europe tried to chase me from my father's throne I would draw my sword against the whole of Europe". But then this sensational picture faded, the flatness of reality took its place, and he exclaimed, "But is there today an imperial France ? That is what I don't know !"

There lay the whole crux of the situation, and all he could do was to fling the problem down before his older friend. And then those dual loyalties which made his position so bewilderingly involved prompted him to add, "If it's my fate never to go back to France, I seriously want to become for Austria another Prince Eugène. I love my grandfather, I feel I am a member of his family," and he said that in aid of Austria he would fight any country in Europe with the one exception of France. Then he turned to the subject of his father. Prokesch always noted "the heated admiration" he had for him. "To take him as model, and so become a great captain, on this point he was all fire, all flame." According to Reichstadt's view, no one understood Napoleon except himself : "that it was a thing worthy of pity, that it was a calumny, not to give his actions any other motive

than ambition ; that his entire life, and all his conduct, had been dictated by great and salutary projects which he had conceived for the happiness of Europe ". So simplicity ran on.

Dietrichstein, watching the impression his pupil's new friend was making on him, thought he would use him as an ally to mould Reichstadt, and he paid Prokesch a private visit. Dietrichstein "complained to me, with all the annoyance of a mother," writes Prokesch, "of the Duke's obstinacy, and his aversion for any other study than military science and mathematics. . . . The Count admitted that his pupil had a good character which, notwithstanding, was stiff with indocility and pride."

Prokesch passed on these complaints to the Duke in so far as he considered them "useful". The Duke, on his side, "rendered entire justice to the Count, above all to his excellent heart, but on the whole did not praise him for anything else".

Prokesch was struck with Reichstadt's ingenuousness when they were alone together ; and describes how, when he came to see him, the boy would rush across the room to meet him "with all the impetuosity of youth". At the same time Prokesch was surprised to find in anyone so young such formed, conclusive opinions on all the people round him ; he was, in fact, already giving evidence of his father's faculty for drilling into the centre of anyone's character and capabilities, and summing up his worth or otherwise to himself. He had by now got under the skin of all his Austrian relations. He was not impressed by what he found there, and would contemptuously repeat to Prokesch the trivial conversations that fluttered about the royal table at meal-times. The Duke had all the concentrated egoism of the young man of nineteen with a career to make, and his conversations with his new friend circled almost entirely around himself, the possibilities that conditions in Europe offered him, and his capacity to respond to them. Prokesch warned him not to confuse reasonable hopes with those that were unreasonable.

"Yours is typically the language of a young man of twenty," his mentor warned him, and added that the difficulty was to know whether he had enough stability in his character. "My distrust", writes Prokesch, "seemed to sadden him": for, in reality, far from possessing the conceit Dietrichstein credited him with, he

was at heart almost pathetically self-diffident. "He embraced me," continues Prokesch, "saying, 'You are right, I don't deserve that you should see in me the son of Napoleon.'"

And with Prokesch, one is confronted with the question as to how much intrinsic worth there actually was in Napoleon's son. One tries, through the mutually contradictory impressions of Deitrichstein and Prokesch, to discover the genuine figure behind. "No one can persuade me that this prince did not possess great qualities", wrote Prokesch after the Duke's death: but Prokesch was an extremely biased friend. Reichstadt's tutor's general opinion that, mentally, he possessed more showiness than stamina is perhaps nearer the truth. Take away the nimbus with which his legend and his parentage surrounded him; pierce the *éclat* bestowed by his being at once young, a captive, a prince, and an exile; discount the glint on his forward-brushed hair and the sveltness of his youthful figure, and how much remains? A seductive air, great gloss of manner, an adroitness of mind that made him appear better educated and more capable than he was, a fretting sense of his own importance which, having no frame in which to display itself, had developed into a lack of self-assurance which he tried to conceal with an egoism at times repellent in its intensity; and, above all, an ambition as all-pervading and as self-corrosive as his father's. If Napoleon's son had never known anything about his parent it would have been better for his character. Reichstadt had imbibed from him the principle that no price, no denial of probity or sincerity, is too high to pay for success. The echo of Napoleon's boast was in his ears — "What do I care for a base action if it leads to success?" At times the son's melodramatic remarks on his own ambition have exactly the ring of the father's. "If God gave me permission to address Him a petition which He would fulfil," exclaimed the young man one day, "I should ask Him to descend from His throne and let me occupy it." But turn this jejune megalomania inside-out, and we find the same nervous sensibility, the same tender-heartedness of his very early days, and in addition, a genuine humility as to his own real worth. Dietrichstein had complained to Prokesch of the Duke's pride, but, writes Prokesch, "I found him modest, without the least touch of pride. With what

childlike candour he offered me his hand ! As if asking for friendship."

Reichstadt's thirst for military distinction can only be described as frantic. In his young exaltation he announced he would put in his will that, if he died before he had had the chance of taking part in a campaign, his coffin was to be carried onto the first battlefield that offered, so that at least his corpse should smell gunpowder : for to have smelt gunpowder was looked on in that era as the *sine qua non* of young masculine smartness. Across his face in his portraits lies that stubborn-bullock look which sits so well on a boyish face when the dispersing smile lies close behind. But, in his case, was the dispersing smile close behind ? At the moment he was solemn with the weight of youth : the enchanting *espièglerie* of his childhood had vanished like dew. Perhaps as he grew younger again with the years he might have developed something of his father's stabbing wit. Napoleon's jovial embrace of, and adaptability to, the outlook of everyman would never have been within his son's scope. But no judgment passed on a boy of nineteen or twenty can be anything but a preliminary judgment. One thing that held promise can at least be said of him : he was developing into a definite personality ; he was not, as with so much pressure brought to bear on him he might well have become, a mere robot pieced together by the royal house of Austria.

12

There was a question of the Duke commencing his military service at Prague ; and his mind had leapt with excitement when one day the Emperor said to him : " I have rented a house for you at Prague . . . with thirty rooms and stables for thirty horses. I shall choose two officers for you. Your mother will have to judge as to your character, and come to a decision as to the question of your future, but you *must* have your liberty this autumn." ¹

The change-over of French sovereigns in the August of 1830, Louis Philippe taking the place of Charles X, set Reichstadt quivering ; and, when Prokesch shortly returned to Austria, and

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 199.

they found themselves alone together, "he threw himself", writes Prokesch, "into my arms", and at once plunged into the subject that ceaselessly circulated in his mind. . . . Talk raced on between them as they sat there within the *décor* of gilding, Indian hangings, and Chinese lacquer which formed the indoor scenery at Schönbrunn of the Duke's own suite of three vast rooms: in the background a statue of Prudence mutely presiding.

The fall of Charles X seemed to Reichstadt, from his own point of view, disastrous, as having come too soon. "I consoled him", writes Prokesch, "by showing him that Louis Philippe's reign would only be of short duration, and would allow for his youthfulness to arrive at maturity."

But Reichstadt was in too tense a condition to be entirely soothed by this programme of the future so neatly arranged for him by his friend. If the crucial moment for him was to arrive so soon, then would he be ready to meet it? "Such as you see me today," he flung out, "am I worthy of my father's throne? . . . Am I capable of action? When the decisive moment comes shan't I find myself taken unawares?"

Prokesch quickly rearranged the future to fit in with his apprehensions, saying that though the fall of Louis Philippe seemed to him inevitable, it need not be feared as coming too soon. But if there is a risible aspect in this variation of programme to suit the boy's every mood, it is proof too of how Prokesch realized the state of nervous tension in which he was now living. It was just in this understanding of his friend's emotional side that his great value to him lay.

Meanwhile, during the time Reichstadt and Prokesch had been parted, the Duke had been doing all he could to get his new friend included among the members of his military household. But Metternich would have none of it. "The two of them together would turn the whole world upside-down,"¹ he protested. That portentous figure stood over against the Reichstadt-Prokesch-Dietrichstein group, determined to prevent any scheme of the Duke's from materialising unless it fitted in with his own policy. Metternich had at one time given Reichstadt some coaching in history, and he knew the inflammable stuff he had to deal with.

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 277.

To Reichstadt, on the other hand, all the hostilities of life seemed concentrated in the person of the egregious Austrian minister. Metternich's unchangeable attitude was that Napoleon's son, the inevitable centre of all Bonaparte intrigue, was, with his energetic ambition, a growing menace to the peace of Europe. In consequence, he was to Metternich a ceaseless irritant: "even to call him to mind", says Prokesch "was disagreeable to him; those who wished to please took good care not to mention his name". If Metternich himself was absolutely forced to refer to him, "he did it with the expression of a man swallowing a bitter medicine".

As for Dietrichstein, the reshuffle in France had stirred and excited him as much as it had his pupil; at the same time he was consumed with nervousness as to how Reichstadt would react when exposed to the full glare of the world. Prokesch noticed that at this juncture the tutor was "absolutely lacking in calmness". Dietrichstein was in the uncomfortable position, goes on Prokesch, of being "afraid of his own desires and hopes. The Prince on the French throne — such was the wish of his days and his nights. But he trembled at each step that might lead on towards this objective. He loved the Prince, but himself still more."

"During October and November", writes Prokesch, "the Prince was extremely melancholy. We read a great deal . . . the French papers, his father's campaigns, Plutarch. He would go through periods of discouragement, would often throw himself into my arms and weep, less over his fate than because of the fear of not being equal to a rôle worthy of his name.

" 'How much longer can it go on?' he would ask impatiently. And then we would set to work to weigh all the possibilities. On the 9th of November I found him reading his father's will. 'Here is the rule of conduct for my whole life!' he cried."¹

For any boy of nineteen it would have been a fretting situation; for one as impressionable as he was it was a torment; and, it is very evident, must have played a part — as, in fact, had nearly all the incidents of his life — in that complete breakdown of his health which was now close upon him. For, if one looks back, at every period of his life a strain had been put upon him: the

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 225-6.

forcing-house of education, emotionalism, and publicity Napoleon had placed him in from birth : the flight from Paris in 1814 : the entire change-over demanded not only of his general existence but of his personality when he arrived in Austria : the conflict during the years that followed between his inner life and his outer : and now the tension of the alternate increase and decrease of his hopes of the French crown : the perpetual uncertainty as to when, if ever, the moment for him to act would arrive ; the fear, if it did arrive, of not being equal to the occasion, not being worthy of his rôle as Napoleon's son : while a yet further complication in his mind was his wish, whenever the opportunity came, to take part in any campaign that offered, and at the same time his anxiety to obey his father's last instructions as dictated to Montholon — that he should avoid warfare. Prokesch himself describes these latter conflicts in the boy's mind as " moral torture ".

13

When Reichstadt was nineteen, one member of the Bonaparte family, a niece of Napoleon, did succeed, from sheer youthful bounce, in getting into touch with that family mystery around whom the thoughts of all the Bonapartes circulated. This young woman was Napoleone, Countess Camerata, a daughter of Napoleon's eldest sister, Elisa (formerly Marianne) Baciocchi. This blooming young woman of twenty-four lived on horseback, and was chiefly remarkable for her devotion to Napoleon and for her violent temper. She often dressed as a man, signed herself " Napoleon ", and tried in everything to ape her uncle. In a word, Napoleone was a goose.

When staying with her aunt, Caroline, at her château at Frohsdorf, she had one day driven into Baden, when she suddenly caught sight of Reichstadt, all young elegance in his svelte Austrian uniform. In an instant she was leaning over the side of the carriage shouting out, " Aren't you ashamed to be wearing the Austrian uniform ? " ¹

Such a first meeting between the cousins was scarcely promising : but Napoleone did not intend to let it rest there.

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 231.

Determined to have interviews with Reichstadt, his mother, and Metternich, she managed to get to Vienna, cutting off Marie Louise at the cross roads as she left Austria on her way home, and having with her a short, if forced, conversation. Metternich not being at Vienna at the moment, Napoleone concentrated on Reichstadt himself. She took a box next his at the Burgtheater ; appeared on the steps of Obenaus' house when Reichstadt was visiting him one evening, and attempted to kiss his hand ; and, finally, fell back on writing him letters. The secret police managed to grab the first two. In the end Prokesch paid her a visit, and this noisy, if sincere supporter of the Duke, left Vienna.

But at the end of this year of 1830 a fresh interest drew Reichstadt's attention. In November Poland expelled the Governor, and a French officer, followed by an immense crowd, rode along the streets of Warsaw, shouting out continuously " Long Live Napoleon II, King of Poland !" Nothing further happened : but the incident did at least give the Duke the satisfaction of being able, in talking to Obenaus, to use the delectable phrase, " If the Poles elect me king . . ." ¹ In fact, as Prokesch remarks, " Each new storm that threatened to break out in the east or the west raised in him a thousand tumultuous waves ". The young man had got into a condition of mind in which he could feel no self-respect unless he acquired a European crown. But Metternich, the man who in reality held the casting vote in every step of his career, was always there with his passive opposition : and when the subject of Poland as regarded the Duke was mentioned in front of him he merely " shrugged his shoulders, and said laughingly, ' Once for all, excluded from every throne ! ' " ²

In addition to the agitation in favour of the Duke in Poland, the Bonaparte partisans in Belgium had nominated him to the newly established throne. But this came to nothing.

One of Napoleon's Marshals, Marmont, was at this time in Vienna, having had the intelligence to attach himself almost exclusively to Metternich, whose dinner-parties he would enliven by the more extravagant and blasphemous of Napoleon's observations, such as, " I've arrived too late ! Look at Alexander ! He gave himself out as the son of Jupiter, and the whole world

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 173.

² *Ibid.* 229.

believed him. Today if I gave out I was the son of God *les dames de la halle* would fling mud at me ! ”

Through Prokesch a meeting was arranged between Napoleon's former Marshal and Napoleon's son. This was to take place at a ball to be given by the English Ambassador at the end of January. Dietrichstein was in a dither of anxiety lest on this occasion Reichstadt should not appear to advantage. Though his pupil had taken part in numbers of Court balls, this one of Lord Cowley's was in a sense the first step in his social and, on account of his projected meeting with Marmont, in his political, career. It was the occasion when, says Prokesch, he made “ his entrance into the world, and every eye was upon him ”.

But this boy, who wore the rose of youth with such grace, had no need to fear as to his reception in any quarter. “ Radiant with beauty ”, cries Prokesch. “ The matt tone of his face, the melancholy line of his mouth, his penetrating glance, so full of fire, his calm, harmonious movements, lent him irresistible charm.” If beneath this successful surface display he felt any nervousness, it must have been increased at this ball by the presence of Dietrichstein, who positively could not resist coaching him every moment by agitated whisperings, “ You're not talking enough . . . ”, “ You're being too dreamy . . . ”, “ You're not holding yourself well ”.

When Marmont was introduced to the Duke, when Napoleon's son and Napoleon's defaulting Marshal actually stood face to face, the moment held such emotional value for both that tears sprang to their eyes : at which the onlookers erroneously jumped to the conclusion that the Duke was blaming Marmont, whereas, actually, Reichstadt's first words were, “ I only see in you the oldest of my father's brothers-in-arms ”.

In Vienna the next day everyone was talking of the success the Duke had been. Apropos of his meeting with Marmont, Metternich's ironic comment was “ The Duke is an extremely clever actor ”. Dietrichstein, for once, radiated satisfaction : but Reichstadt complained to Prokesch how much his tutor had fussed him, and how tired out he was by his evening : the last an admission more ominous than he knew.

The young man by now had his own military household, but

the three officers who composed it were none of them men who could in any way either support, inspire, or develop him. Count Hartmann, a capable soldier, was merely a mass of good-natured obsequiousness. Standeisky was an equally good soldier and equally good-natured, but, comments Prokesch, "without any culture". The third, Baron de Moll, suggested by Prokesch, was, he says, "agreeable and gay, capable of loving the Duke, who soon gave him his entire sympathy".

Secondary to Reichstadt's preoccupation with his own career was his preoccupation with the graceful figures of the Viennese drawing-rooms. There was a moment when it seemed that a young married woman, Countess Karolyi, would become his mistress, so much did she fulfil his idea of that rôle. Prokesch was all for his embarking on some love affair to take his mind off his "inner and consuming wrestlings" of spirit, but at the same time was anxious his mistress should be a woman of exceptional calibre, which Countess Karolyi was not. However, this nascent affair came to nothing.

It is not necessary for Prokesch to assure us as regards Reichstadt that the Viennese ladies "showed him exceptional kindness", for any woman was herself instantly illumined by even momentary proximity with this young man of the imperial house. Continuous anxiety in tussle with his burgeoning youth had imprinted his face, not with that tedious quality which anxiety gives to an older countenance, but with an alluring gravity cut across by the summer blue of his eyes. This tall, expensively tailored stripling, gliding about with his dressed curls, his crimson sash aslant his chest, the embodiment at one and the same time of youth and sophistication, aureoled with past legend and future possibilities, was the most glamorous young man of Vienna. He had only to walk into the room, to bow, to give voice to a few words, and the impression he wished to make was made. But this drawing-room chinoiserie aspect of him was merely his surface aspect. His chief occupation was, as ever, the scanning the political horizon for a crown for his own head. As regards any love affairs, the tastes and inclinations that absorbed him, says Prokesch, "left little place for anything but fugitive impressions"; and as for that profligacy with which certain historians credit

him, Prokesch puts it entirely out of court. "As if the worries of his life were not enough . . ." protests his friend, referring to the gossip that so erroneously attributed his premature death in part to his relations with women.

14

On the 3rd of February 1831 Reichstadt had bestowed on him another of his bogus kingdoms by being proclaimed Napoleon II, King of Italy, by the revolutionaries of the north and centre of the peninsula. Metternich, rightly or wrongly, chose to consider that this revolutionary movement had its origin in France. There resulted an involved political situation between Austria, France, and Italy; and in March, Metternich, using the Duke as a menace to bring Louis Philippe to heel, gave the ultimatum — either "the return of legal order in the peninsula or Napoleon II on the throne of Italy".

The injunction Metternich gave Count Apponyi in Paris to deliver this message was the nearest the unfortunate Reichstadt was ever to get to possessing a crown.

In March cries arose in the Paris streets of "*Vive Napoléon II !*" "*A bas le roi Louis Philippe !*" These cries came from General Lacroix with a following of from ten to twelve thousand workmen. Two months later General Montholon, one of Napoleon's executors, asked the Austrian Ambassador whether under an assumed name he could be given a passport for Vienna so as to discover Metternich's views on the proclamation of Napoleon II, which proclamation the General considered imminent: and in November of this year Jerome tried to get permission to send an agent to Vienna to induce the Austrian Cabinet to consent to the restoration of Napoleon's son. "In fact," says Wertheimer, "the Court of Vienna could scarcely keep pace with the numerous attempts to involve the Emperor Francis in the Bonaparte movement in favour of his grandson."

In the spring of 1830 Malfatti had become physician to the Duke; and, incidentally, a most useful reporter to posterity regarding his patient.

Reichstadt was to have taken up his military duties that autumn but, on account of his bad state of health, Malfatti had opposed this, and in consequence Reichstadt's career did not start till the spring of 1831. In the Duke's mind this put a black mark against Malfatti, and he determined that in future he would hide any symptoms of illness from this interfering fellow. However queer he felt, he would keep it to himself. In July of this year Reichstadt had been promoted to Major in the regiment of Salins, and in November the Emperor made his grandson Lieutenant-Colonel of the Nassau Infantry. "I find no words", he wrote to his grandfather, "to express the joy and emotion which this new favour, this new mark of your paternal love, has awakened in me."

Now when he took up his regimental life, Malfatti, full of concern, watched the boy forcing himself to undertake duties that were far beyond his strength. "His life, in fact," writes the doctor, "was at that time a regular process of combustion: he had hardly four hours' sleep . . . he scarcely ate." Added to this, tall though he now was, he was still growing: he was perceptibly thinner: at times his face looked livid. He had been subject all his life to a strange symptom, that of his hands turning yellow; and the anxious eyes around him noticed that this curious tinge had again appeared. Malfatti, going down to the barracks, would urge him to drink those mineral waters, to take those muriatic baths which, last year, had done him so much good. The only answer he would get was that there was no time now for that sort of thing. It was quite impossible for Malfatti to get him to say how he felt. Ask him, and an evasive look came into those young but now strained-looking blue eyes. Terrified that Malfatti might again trip him up in his military career, "he would not", says the doctor, "tell me a word of the truth". "Several times I took him by surprise at the barracks in a state of extreme exhaustion. One day, among others, I found him lying on the sofa drained of strength, emaciated, nearly fainting." At such a moment it was no good denying anything. For once his mask was off, and in his wretchedness he complained to Malfatti of his "miserable body" which would not do what was demanded of it. His doctor told him he possessed "an iron spirit in a body of crystal", and warned him that if he went on abusing

his strength he would kill himself. This remark no doubt raised the Duke's suspicions as to what obstructive policy Malfatti might pursue ; and after this one moment of confidence, whatever questions the doctor put to him were invariably met with the parrot-cry, " I am perfectly well."

In August a bad catarrhal fever absolutely compelled him to stay in bed for a day : but for a day only. Then the forced labour started again.

Malfatti talked the situation over with Hartmann, and they decided definitely to put a stop to this insanity. An outbreak of cholera in Vienna gave them their opportunity. It was obvious that if the Duke caught it in his now weakened condition it would be the end of him. Here was their chance of getting him back to a quiet life at Schönbrunn. Hartmann gave Malfatti's report on Reichstadt's condition to the Emperor, and left it to him to act. A review was shortly to take place outside Vienna, and the Emperor, again with that curious harshness to a boy to whom he was devoted, ordered Malfatti to come up to him at the end of the review and read out the medical report to him word for word in front of Reichstadt. All happened as arranged, and, as Malfatti finished his recital, the Emperor turned to his grandson.

" You have heard what Malfatti has said," he adjured him ; " you will go to Schönbrunn immediately."

Reichstadt bowed respectfully ; but, as he turned away, he shot out at Malfatti, " Then it's you who've put me under arrest."

Two months' complete quiet at Schönbrunn acted, in Malfatti's words, " as a vivifying balm to his shattered organs ", but this enforced inactivity, this complete withdrawal from barrack life — to him an existence lovely with all delights — this sense of final frustration at the very moment when he had at last escaped from restraints ; the dreadful truth that was biting into his mind as to his physical weakness, as to the hold his consumptive tendencies were gaining over him ; all this dragged at his spirit. Prokesch, coming in to see him in the evenings during this winter, probably at the Hofburg, would be met as he entered the room, no longer by that flushed enthusiasm he had first known, but by a set, unsmiling face, and would at times be received in a silence that might last the whole evening. It was no use for Prokesch to

suggest working together, as they used to do, on military science. Worse still from Prokesch's personal point of view, as the weeks went on Reichstadt would burst out into irritability with his much-enduring friend.

Except for Prokesch the Duke was singularly isolated. His other great friend, Count Maurice Esterházy, was away. Reichstadt was drawn closer than ever to the Emperor, for his grandfather was always ready to enter into long discussions over that ever insoluble problem, his grandson's future ; and, too, the Duke loved this elderly man " because of his affectionate feelings, his sweetness, and the sense of fairness he showed over his [Reichstadt's] situation and his hopes ".

The Duke had recovered from his annoyance with Malfatti, and when he heard that his doctor was laid up with a violent attack of gout, went to see him constantly, asking him to forgive his former disagreeableness. Malfatti was a cultured man ; and he viewed his patient with an eye less coloured by personal emotion than either Dietrichstein or Prokesch. He was struck by the perspicacity Reichstadt showed over any subject they discussed, and by the facility with which he expressed himself. His salient characteristic, Malfatti considered, was his penetration as a judge of character, and he speaks of the " cleverness with which he would make the truth appear by the adroitness of his questions which he would set as traps ".

At that time the Byronic outlook lay about Europe like a lake of melancholy into which distressed young men would take their plunge, finding in its turgid waters a bitter sweetness, a kind of personal message of consolation. " There is in this great poet ", Reichstadt remarked one day to Malfatti, " a profound mystery, something gloomy which responds to the tendencies of my own spirit : I like to identify my mind with his."

Malfatti urged him instead to read Lamartine.

Round about this time, Reichstadt would occasionally discuss with Prokesch an idea of " leaving Vienna secretly, of appearing all of a sudden in France " ; but, says Prokesch, this was nothing " but a dream, for, indeed, he did not know what reception lay in store for him in that country ". However, when in February 1832 his friend went off to Rome on a diplomatic mission, Reich-

stadt told him as they parted that he had decided to be patient and to wait before making any move till he should not only see his way clear to his father's throne, but also the chance of his remaining on it. These solemn discussions on the subject with Prokesch gave a kind of solidity to hopes which at heart the anxious young man must have known were ephemeral.

A few weeks before Prokesch went away Reichstadt had appeared — for what was in reality to be the last time — at the head of his battalion. The occasion was a military funeral. Even as he sat on his horse, he was shivering with fever, about which, in his usual way, he had said nothing. All went well till the moment came for him to give the word of command for the salute. He opened his mouth, but not a sound came. His voice had completely gone, and he had to be taken home; in what condition of mind can be imagined. Another day, exasperated at mildly trotting on horseback, or slowly bumping along in a carriage when the weather was fine, which was all his doctors allowed, he insisted on going for a ride on a day when the air was cold and damp. Flinging aside all precautions he put his horse to the gallop. The same evening he drove along the Prater in an open carriage, up and down till sunset: finally, a wheel of the carriage giving way, he started to walk home, but his strength gave out, and he fell down in the street. The result of these combined efforts was a violent inflammation of the chest, and loss of hearing in his left ear. "It seems to me", protested Malfatti, "that in this unhappy young man there is an active principle that pushes him on to suicide."

That year there was a wet spring, and Reichstadt, clamouring to be in the air, would go out, only to get chilled and so restart all his worst symptoms. He lived in a see-saw of hope and despair: one moment he believed that by sheer determination he would still be able to lead a normal life: the next he was tripped up by physical weakness, by his inability to fight the germs of consumption. At the end of May he was taken back to Schönbrunn.

There, every day percolating through the early-morning freshness came the notes of the reveille from the barracks across the great courtyard. Each day to the boy, as he lay there weak and faint, that poignant call, pulsating through the spring air, must

have seemed like a voice summoning him to the life he loved, that life from which he was now most wretchedly, most humiliatingly cut off completely. For to the young man of his day war did not present itself as it does in ours as the horrific mechanism, the hideous necessity in which even the most peace-loving nation may be forced to participate. Then it was the natural vocation into which well-born youth poured its energy; it was self-realization; life at full flood; the seal to manhood; impregnated not only with virile romance but tinged with almost the same quality as the quest for the Grail. All this, as one gazes at that prostrate, coughing figure, must be taken into account if one is to understand the settled misery in his mind. As for his body, it seemed now as if it were experimenting with one type of malady after another: he was racked with fever and inflammation; his chest, his liver, his viscera were attacked; his pulse raced; he shivered with cold; he was tormented with gout. The doctors examined, consulted, and examined again. They had an idea that if he went to Italy, to Naples, he might get better. Here, in this suggestion of a definite step to be taken, in the idea of going to Italy, that country impregnated with memories of his father, here at last was something that gave him pleasure.

"But . . ." he said, accustomed as he was to frustration at every turn, "don't you think there will be obstacles? . . . The Emperor is away. . . . Go and see Prince Metternich: ask him if it's possible."

"Tell the Duke of Reichstadt," said Metternich, "that, except for France, of which country it doesn't depend on me to give him the *entrée*, he can go into whatever country suits him." An answer at once kind and ironic.

In May the absent Emperor, to cheer the invalid, appointed him Colonel of the 60th Regiment, that of Prince Gustavus Vasa. But this time there was no boundingly youthful letter of gratitude; for at the moment he was too weak to put pen to paper.

Within the impersonal, vacuous atmosphere of the vast rooms and street-like corridors of Schönbrunn and the Hofburg, Reich-

stadt, his young uncle and aunt — Archduke Francis and his wife Sophie — and their two small children formed a little inner world of snug intimacy. Reichstadt was so fond of the children that a portrait was done of him sitting with the small boy perched on his knee and the little girl propped against him. This boy, Franz Joseph, was to become the future Emperor of Austria.

Now, when the Duke was so pathetically ill, Sophie, who was shortly to have a baby, wove round him a network of solicitude. "She was", says Hartmann, "a beneficent providence for the days of agony of this unfortunate young man." The love of scandal has linked the names of Reichstadt and Sophie in the inevitable manner. Actually, there is not a shred of reliable evidence that their relationship was anything but the very natural one of a young married woman's kindness to her husband's dying nephew, a boy to whom they were both devoted. In Sophie's letters to him he is "her dear good old fellow": and her husband in his letters to Reichstadt, would sign himself, "Your loving Franz".

The wet spring of this year slid gradually into a summer of suffocating heat. The people of Vienna were apparently always allowed to wander about the Schönbrunn gardens as much as they liked, and now, besides the relief, on these stifling days, of escaping from the Vienna streets to listen to the rhythmic plashing of the palace fountains, there was the exciting possibility that they might, down a garden path or up on a balcony, catch a glimpse of the dying prince: that once show-figure that would be seen sitting his horse or driving his carriage along the Prater. But Reichstadt's one wish, emaciated and wretched as he now was, was to hide himself away from those scrutinizing eyes; therefore, screens would be put up on the balcony outside his room, and then, in a red-and-white striped dressing-gown over his white trousers, a Greek cap pulled on over his blond curls, he would be helped out to ensconce himself on this balcony, hoping he might be left in peace.

"I am so weak . . ." he would murmur to Hartmann, "I implore you, try and arrange so that they don't see me in this miserable state," and Hartmann would go out and pass on his

wishes to the trailing garden figures, who would good-naturedly take themselves off.

Sometimes, instead of the balcony, he would be carried to a small garden, enclosed within the great show one. Here it was all quietness, all shade. On one side of the lawn was an open pavilion, an eagle with outspread wings decorating the ceiling, and there, stretched out beneath this symbol of Austria, his eyes on the tree-surrounded grass, on the flowers, each with its softly drawn shadow, Reichstadt could at least lie undisturbed, battling with the ache of despair ; contemplating the wreckage of his every hope.

One day when the Archbishop d'Erlau came to see him Reichstadt said that the cause of his trouble was not his chest but "herpes of the stomach, the same as his father had suffered from".¹ Most strange and poignant of self-deceptions ! This pretence to himself that he was ill from the same supposititious disease as his father, rid him, perhaps, a little of the sense of humiliation. He talked to the Archbishop of getting well . . . of going to Ischl. But did he really believe he would do either ? Hardly : for in a moment, when the Archbishop counselled patience, he retorted, "Have patience ? That would really be difficult now !" and, says the elder man, "At this he began to laugh softly to himself, which, so it seems, was a characteristic of the Emperor Napoleon."²

At the end of June Marie Louise — up till now not having been told how ill her son was — arrived at Schönbrunn. Reichstadt had been in his usual state of quivering anticipation at the thought of seeing her again. "The Archduchess", says Hartmann, "asked me as well as the doctor, Malfatti, to remain with the invalid for fear the force of his emotion would make him need our help. There are no colours in which to paint that sad embrace : that young man, formerly so beautiful, actually without any voice, with the imprint of death upon him, raising himself up on his bed . . . to press his weak arms round his all but fainting mother."

Unable to keep back her tears, Marie Louise went out of the room, "but", goes on Hartmann, "she soon came back to be with him : all her cares, her every moment, were henceforth devoted to him unreservedly. For several days this longed-for

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 356.

² *Ibid.* 356.

return of his mother seemed to suspend the Duke of Reichstadt's maladies."

There are two other figures whom one would certainly expect to see moving about that tapestry-hung bedroom where the dying boy lay : the Emperor and Dietrichstein. Both were absent. Of the reason why, when his grandson was dying, the Emperor never even came to see him, there is no explanation. Possibly it was the fear that if he came near Vienna he might catch cholera : there already having been some cases at the Hofburg. Himself was one of the few people to whom, as the Emperor knew, his grandson was devoted, and his complete desertion of him in his hour of need is only equalled by his having twenty years earlier acted as international procurer to his own daughter.

The case of Dietrichstein is more complicated. During the early part of his pupil's illness he came to see him every day : then he went off to Munich, ostensibly to be with his daughter during her coming confinement. But once gone, he did not return. All those years of educating Napoleon's son had been for him years of exasperation. The boy was too calculating, possessed too prickly and disagreeable characteristics, to have awakened any really deep affection in Dietrichstein, but, all the same, affection for him of a sort he did have. Further, as already stressed, Dietrichstein had gradually identified his own personality with his : in this egregious boy's triumphal apotheosis his tutor was (such is the impression given) to have received the one conclusive inner satisfaction which life still held for him. It may well have been, confronted on one side with that now piteous wreck lying on the bed, on the other with the sense of hideous personal disappointment, the complete wastage of sixteen years' continuous effort, that he found himself unable to keep his emotions under control, unable to hold back those tears which came too readily. Our eyes, as we watch that sad-faced figure seated in the carriage clattering out of the Schönbrunn courtyard away to Munich, are more puzzled than condemnatory.

Prokesch, too, was still away on his mission. He knew that his friend was ill, but had no suspicion that he was dying.

As the days went on, Reichstadt, too weak now even to wish to be carried onto the balcony, lay back helpless on his pillows ;

while outside in the garden the beautiful sequence of the summer hours passed unheeded.

As those suffocating July days succeeded each other, Baron de Moll spent long hours either in the invalid's room or writing to Dietrichstein to tell him how he was. The kind-hearted young Chamberlain would sit reading aloud . . . on and on. . . . Moll found that whenever he talked to him of the projected journey south, of the carriage that was being built to take him there, it seemed to give him pleasure. But the miseries of his physical condition were becoming ever more insistent. Now, at last, that lifelong straining after the titanic stature of his father was over. The assaults of illness were irresistibly drawing on his weakened forces, on the rags and tatters of such manhood as was left him. The insistent, the miserable urgencies of the moment were that Moll, putting his arms beneath his shoulders, should drag him up a little higher on his pillows, or should patiently help him to remove the excretions that were continuously gathering about his mouth.

"What don't I make you do!" Reichstadt murmured one day to his friend. "What wretched days you spend with me,"¹ and he gave him a grateful squeeze of the hand.

His now hourly misery had ameliorated his character, and Moll said that he had become more gentle and agreeable than he had ever known him.

Metternich wished to come and see the dying boy, but he, realizing he was nothing now but a deplorable object, did not wish to undergo the scrutiny of that thin cold stare. However, unknown to him, Metternich got his way, coming to stand for a brief moment in the doorway. "I don't remember" he remarked afterwards, "ever having seen anyone who was ill so ravaged by disease."²

16

Coming into Reichstadt's room at seven o'clock on the morning of Saturday, July the 21st, Moll found him³ "very oppressed and restless". He could only speak with difficulty, but Moll caught the half-strangled words, "I want to die . . . there is nothing

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 357.

² *Ibid.* 362.

³ *Ibid.* 357.

for me but death," words which were said, wrote Moll, "with an emotion that tore my heart"; then, with a despairing gesture, the boy, clenching his fists, flung them down on the bed. Within a few hours he had fallen into a violent fever. Suddenly those around him heard the words, "Harness the horses! I must go to meet my father. . . ." All day, a day oppressive with coming thunder, he remained extremely ill, and Malfatti, paying him a last visit at eight o'clock in the evening, ordered that if later on he had a sense of suffocation he should be given compresses and blisters. At ten o'clock his bed was made comfortable for the night, and lit candles were brought into the room and placed about. Moll went into the next room, and stretched himself out on a sofa, leaving the door open between. Nickert, the male nurse, was sleeping in the Duke's room. An atmosphere of somnolence — a somnolence impregnated with strained apprehension — fell on the two rooms. . . . In the darkness the Schönbrunn clocks continued to tick away the unnoticed hours. . . . Then, outside, in the warm heavy night, in the woods around, on every path and tree and pavilion in the garden, on all the roofs of the palace itself, on its statues and balustrades and window-sills, there was to be heard a whispering crepitation . . . a whisper that increased . . . that turned gradually into a faint drubbing and pattering . . . into a soothing wet rustling . . . into a down-rushing curtain of summer rain. Soon there was a whole muted orchestra of mingled sounds . . . a pouring, a swishing, a sluicing, and, beneath this continuous lighter aria, the gurgling of gutters, the sudden splash of a brimming-over of collected drops. . . . Somewhere round about, thunder rumbled, and then was silent . . . now and again lightning zazzled . . . and still the rain came gushing, driving its long piston-rods on a million leaves . . . and then all at once, striking across the blur of water-sounds, there came a loud crash from the further side of the courtyard; one of the stone eagles that guarded the gates, struck by lightning, had fallen to the ground . . . and then again there was only the swish of the down-pouring rain.

A little before four o'clock Moll woke up to find Lambert at his side urging him to come at once. Scrambling off the sofa, he rushed into the next room, and found the Duke in a heart-rending

state. "I am drowning," he gasped, "I am drowning," and seemed on the point of suffocation. The two men dragged him up higher, which relieved him for a moment, and then, all but prostrate, in painful jerks he stammered, "Call my mother." There was a table close to his bed, and perhaps in his anguish he hit against it, for he gasped out, "Take away the table ! Take away the table ! I don't want anything any more !" ¹

With that curious attention to secondary considerations so often shown by those around the dying, Moll, thinking the crisis would pass, and not wishing to disturb Marie Louise, made a sign to Lambert not to fetch her, and the valet stopped, hesitating, at the door. Malfatti had by now come into the room. "The doctor and I", writes Moll, "were by the bed and supporting him. The Prince seemed to regain possession of himself, breathed painfully, then he suddenly gripped my arm, pressed it irritably, while with the other hand he struck his chest, with the greatest effort crying out, 'Compresses, blisters !' These", Moll goes on, "were his last words. He had scarcely said them when his eyes became fixed and glassy. The nervous movements of his face and body ceased, and he fell into a state of complete apathy that left no doubt of the nearness of his end. The valet came with the compresses, and I left the dying man to him and the doctor." ²

Moll hurried from the room, and went at a run along the corridors, up and down the staircases, across the lobbies and landings of the sleeping palace, an urgent messenger of death, knocking on the doors, imparting his disturbing tidings, and then back to the sick-room.

Soon Marie Louise appeared at the door. Moll went towards her ; she shook so much that she clutched at his arm to keep herself from falling. The Duke could not speak, but with a flicker of his lids showed that he recognized her. Now, in the dimness of this big room, lit only here and there by the candles, their flames curtsying at the slightest stir of air, many figures were softly moving about. Besides Marie Louise and Moll, Malfatti, the valet, and Nickert, there were Count Hartmann, the Archduke Francis, the Countess Scarampi, and others. A young priest

¹ *Le Fils de Napoléon*, Bourgoing, 359.

² *Ibid.* 359-60.

and a sacristan came in to give Extreme Unction. Everyone knelt. The dying boy lay passive but conscious, his eyes following the chaplain's movements. When the moment came for the ceremonial touching of the patient's forehead and hands it was noticed that Marie Louise was on the point of fainting. They dragged her up onto a chair : but after a little time she knelt down again.

The prayers were over . . . all watched and waited. At one moment there was slight movement in the stillness of the room as Countess Scarampi, choked with her tears, made her way out. The prostrate figure lay quietly now, his lips moved slightly but no sound came from them. . . . Round the doorway, irresistibly drawn by the spectacle of a dying prince, all the Duke's servants were huddled . . . the atmosphere of the room was, says Moll, "suffocating".

The valet, Lambert, a little withdrawn from the group round the bed, gazed minute after minute at the scene before him, at the figures, some kneeling, some standing around the bed, the whole immovable as a picture. The pose of each figure became so stamped on his mind that, later — or, possibly, at the time — he made a drawing of the group, a drawing that, actually, is not much more than a few scratched lines.

A few minutes after five the Duke made a slight movement of the head . . . then another . . . and at that instant his strange destiny was accomplished.

A little later everyone, worn out with strain, was gone. The room, a few minutes before so crowded, stood empty. No one had thought of blowing out the candles, and they alone stood sentinel about the quiet bed. But now some figures appeared in the doorway. . . . What figures? That has never been ascertained. Secretively these unnamed crept to and fro about the room ; quietly they laid hands on objects that had belonged to the Duke ; in that or another room, they discovered his whips and his walking-sticks . . . every one of them they appropriated. ("It is as though everything had been scattered to the winds", Foresti wrote later.) And even this was not enough . . . they crept up to the bed, and now a furtive hand took hold of a tuft of

hair on that passive head and cut it off . . . another hand followed suit . . . and another, and another. By the time they had done with him every one of those blond curls had gone. Then, stealthily, out they went again, clutching their plunder . . . creeping . . . tiptoeing. . . . Like rats they had come . . . and like rats they went.

Outside the foetid sick-room the sunshine of early morning lay over the garden, over the leaves still wetly glistening with the night's storm. And then, quivering up through the limpid air came the notes of the reveille, mounting, questing, aspiring . . . as it were the inner voice of the whole Napoleonic drama ; that modern, that most spectacular of the *Gestes* of France. But as for all the fanfaronade of the first French Empire ; as for all the pains Napoleon had been at to secure a direct dynasty — all that it had devolved into was, lying there among his crumpled sheets, a dead, disfigured boy.

SYNOPSIS OF NAPOLEON'S CAREER

- 1769 Born 15th August.
- 1785 Entered the Artillery
- 1795 Insurrection in Paris against the Convention. Napoleon was brought into prominence by his help in crushing the rising (the 13th *Vendémiaire*) and was made General-in-Chief of the Army of the Interior.
- 1796 Married Josephine. Made General-in-Chief of the Army of Italy. Crossed the Alps, and subdued Piedmont, Milan, and Venice.
- 1797 Treaty of Campo Formio.
- 1798 Egyptian campaign. Captured Alexandria and Cairo, defeated the Mamelukes at the Pyramids. Nelson destroyed the French fleet at Aboukir (1st August.)
- 1799 Returned Paris. Directory was suppressed (the *coup d'État du dix-huit Brumaire*) and Napoleon became First Consul.
- 1800 Crossed the Alps and won the battle of Marengo (14th June). Further victories by his Generals followed.
- 1801 Treaty of Lunéville with Austria, and Peace of Amiens with England.
- 1804 Proclaimed Emperor 18th May. The next day created his fourteen Marshals. In December, crowned at Notre Dame.
- 1805 Coalition of England, Russia, and Austria against France. Nelson destroyed French and Spanish fleets at Trafalgar (21st October). Napoleon beat Austria at Ulm. Napoleon beat Russia and Austria at Austerlitz (2nd December).
- 1806 The Holy Roman Empire ceased to exist ; and Napoleon instituted the Confederation of the Rhine. Napoleon beat Prussia at Jena and Auerstädt.
- 1807 Napoleon defeated Russia at Friedland. Peace of Tilsit with Russia.
- 1808 Napoleon forced the King of Spain and his son to renounce their rights to the throne, and substituted his brother Joseph.
- 1809 Defeated Austria at Wagram (6th July). Marriage with Josephine annulled.
- 1810 Napoleon married Marie Louise.
- 1811 King of Rome born.
- 1812 Napoleon declared war against Russia (22nd June). Entered Moscow (14th September). Retreat began 19th October.
- 1813 Napoleon defeated at Leipzig. The Allies—England, Russia, Prussia and Austria—invaded France.
- 1814 Napoleon's first Abdication (11th April). Banished to Elba. Louis XVIII ascended the throne.
- 1815 Napoleon returned to France in March. Louis XVIII left Paris (19th March). The Hundred Days followed. English, Russian, Prussian, Austrian, and Dutch troops converged on France. Waterloo (18th June). Napoleon abdicated. Surrendered to England (July 15th). Arrived St. Helena (15th October).
- 1821 Died 5th May.

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